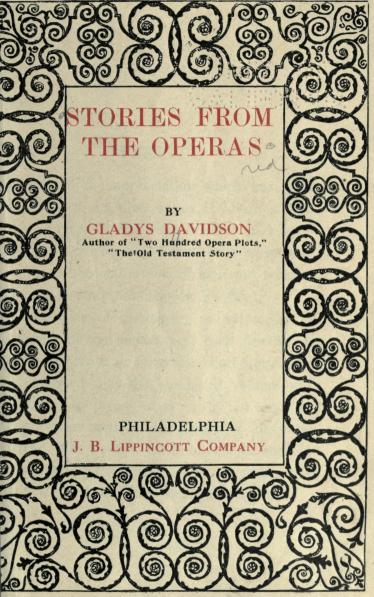




STORIES FROM THE OPERAS



Isolda snatched the cup from his trembling hand, & drank-



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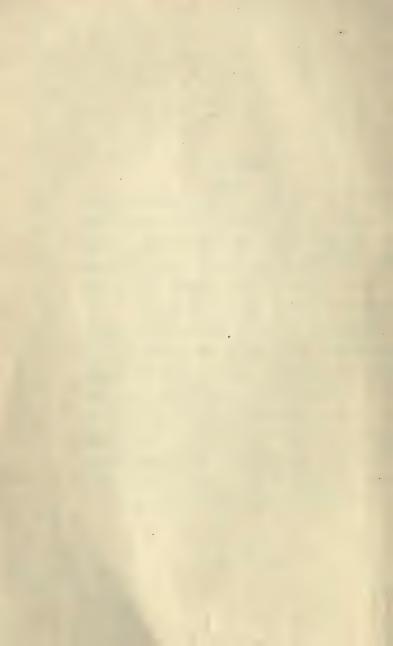
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PREFACE

Owing to the appreciation which has been accorded to my three series of "Stories from the Operas," it has been decided to re-issue the collection in one volume, and to include in this additional stories of new and popular operas recently produced in England.

The plan of the work, as before, is to present all the incidents of each *libretto* in the clear, readable form of a short story; and it is hoped that the combined volume will continue to prove of interest, not only to opera-goers but to all lovers of dramatic tales. The three volumes have been entirely reset and re-collated in a manner which it is hoped will make them easier for reference.

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AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- Messrs. Brockhaus, Leipzic. (For Humperdinck's Königs-kinder.)
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- Messrs. Novello & Co., Ltd., London. (For Beethoven's Fidelio, Bellini's La Somnambula, Meyerbeer's Star of the North, Verdi's La Traviata and Rigoletto, and Wagner's The Flying Dutchman and Tannhauser.)
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- Herr Josef Weinberger, Vienna. (For Wolf-Ferrari's The Jewels of the Madonna.)

G. D.

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AUBER



STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

FRA DIAVOLO

One bright Easter Eve, carly in the nineteenth century, a lively group of carbineers were gathered together in the inn of Terracina near Naples, drinking success to the enterprise they were engaged upon; for they were just about to attack a horde of brigands supposed to be in that neighbourhood, and were expecting to meet with many exciting adventures.

The captain of the outlaw band, Fra Diavolo, was the most celebrated bandit in Italy, and fully justified his sinister name, for his daring raids and impudent roguery had made him a terror to the country-side, and the mere mention of his name caused peaceful travellers to tremble in their shoes.

All previous attempts to capture the cunning outlaw had proved ineffectual; so when at last a troop of carbineers was sent out from Naples to lie in wait for the whole band, joy was felt in every village round about, and the peasants hoped to be freed

from their dreaded enemy at last.

The soldiers had been awaiting news at the inn of Terracina, but on learning that Fra Diavolo and his rogues had been seen in the neighbourhood, they at once received orders to start off in pursuit. In merry haste, they drank the stirrup-cups poured out

1

for them by old Matteo, the inn-keeper, and his pretty daughter, Zerlina; for a price had been set upon the head of Fra Diavolo, and they were eager to win the reward.

But the captain of this gay troop, a handsome young brigadier named Lorenzo, sat alone at a side table, full of gloom; and when the inn-keeper presently invited all the company to attend the wedding of his daughter with a neighbouring farmer on the morrow, the look of sadness on his face

deepened still more.

For Lorenzo, on arriving at the inn, had quickly fallen in love with the pretty Zerlina himself, and when he had declared his passion for her, the maiden had gladly responded with an answering love as deep and tender as his own. But Matteo, the inn-keeper, would not hear of his daughter wedding a poor brigadier who had naught but his wretched pay to live upon, and to settle the matter he hastily arranged a marriage for her with Francesco, a well-to-do young farmer who came forward as a suitor just at this time. Negotiations were quickly made, and the ceremony fixed to take place on Easter Morn; and now, on the evening before, Zerlina, compelled to obey her parent's will, was bidden to say farewell to her portionless lover.

Whilst the two were whispering together in a sad undertone, a loud noise of excited voices was suddenly heard without, and next moment a lady and gentleman rushed wildly into the inn, both dishevelled, and showing signs of great alarm. They declared in agitated tones that they had just been set upon by a band of fierce brigands, who had robbed them of all their jewels and available property, and they added that it was only by leaving the robbers in undisputed possession of their travelling carriage that they had been able to escape with their

lives.

Whilst Zerlina ran to attend to the exhausted lady, the gentleman, who was extremely fussy in manner, introduced himself as Lord Allcash, an English peer of great wealth touring through Italy with his newlywedded wife, explaining that it was scarcely a mile away that their postillion had been stopped by the bandits.

On hearing this, Lorenzo exclaimed that it must have been the very band of outlaws he had been sent to capture—that of the famous Fra Diavolo—and calling his men together, he bade them march forth to the hillside at once. Full of joy, the carbineers sprang to their feet and hurried from the inn, eager for their expected prey; and with a last sad farewell to the now weeping Zerlina, Lorenzo quickly followed.

Lord Allcash immediately sat down to write out a notice, offering a reward for the recovery of his stolen property; and his wife, having noticed the tender parting between Zerlina and her lover, drew the girl aside and asked the cause of her trouble. Having learnt that it was only a matter of dowry that kept these two loving hearts apart, the lady, being of a sentimental disposition, persuaded her husband to make the reward a thousand ducats, hoping that the prize would be gained by the handsome Lorenzo, who would thus become an eligible suitor for the inn-keeper's daughter.

The notice was then fastened in a prominent place; and Lord and Lady Allcash were just about to retire to the private apartments that had been hastily prepared for them, when a splendid carriage suddenly drew up at the inn door. A handsome man, of gay débonnair appearance, stepped lightly to the ground, and bowed gracefully to the English tourists; and Lady Allcash, to her delight, recognised a charming fellow-traveller who had followed in their wake for several days past, and with whom she had more than once indulged in a pleasant flirtation.

But her husband uttered an angry exclamation, for, being somewhat dull and stupid himself, he was already jealous of his coquettish wife's brilliant

admirer; and seizing her by the hand, he led her into an inner chamber, very much against her will.

The gay newcomer, who gave his name as the Marquis of San Carlo, entered the inn and ordered a repast, announcing that he meant to remain the night; and old Matteo bustled his servants about in high good-humour, blessing the good fortune that had brought two great lords to his hostelry on the same day.

He informed the Marquis, with many humble apologies, that he himself would be absent from the inn until morning, since he intended to spend the night with his future son-in-law, Francesco, who was to be married to his daughter on the morrow; but he assured him that every possible attention would be accorded to him during his absence.

So far from expressing annoyance at this announcement, the Marquis showed signs of pleasure, and as he sat down to the supper that had been quickly spread before him, he asked the landlord for the news of the neighbourhood. Matteo informed him that the talk of the country-side at that time was all of the daring bandit, Fra Diavolo, whose lawless band had only a few hours ago set upon and robbed the rich English lord and lady whom he had seen on entering the inn; and seeing that the Marquis was inclined to scoff at the notion of brigands, he bade his daughter sing to their guest a ballad well known to the peasants round about, in which the wild deeds of the famous robber were set forth in glowing colours.

Just as the song came to an end, two rough, swarthy men, wrapped in dark, ragged cloaks, entered the inn, and asked for shelter for the night; and when Matteo, suspicious of their rascally looks, declared that he did not harbour vagabonds, the Marquis good-naturedly begged him to grant their request, saying that he would gladly pay for their board and lodging. Matteo, though somewhat surprised at the great lord's generous offer, made no

more objection, but ordered one of the servants to provide the tramps with food, and afterwards to lodge them in the barn; and then, bidding his noble guest farewell for the night, he set off to the farm of Francesco, calling to Zerlina to accompany him part

of the way.

No sooner had the inn-keeper and his daughter departed, than the two vagabonds, casting hasty glances around, approached the Marquis and began to talk familiarly with him; for, though old Matteo little imagined it, the dashing guest he had served so obsequiously was in reality none other than the famous Fra Diavolo himself, now engaged on one of his most desperate enterprises! Having heard that a rich English lord and his lady were travelling through Italy, the daring brigand had determined to relieve them of all their available belongings, and to this end, being of gentlemanly aspect and manners, he had provided himself with fashionable attire, and made their acquaintance under the name of the Marquis of San Carlo. The coquettish Lady Allcash had quickly fallen under the fascinating spell of the brilliant Marquis, who, regardless of the fussy husband's black looks, had flirted desperately with her from the beginning; and, following in their wake from hotel to hotel, he had discovered under the pretence of friendly interest, the exact amount of all the valuables the wealthy pair had brought with them from England.

Having learnt that Lord Allcash intended to bank the sum of twenty thousand gold pieces at Leghorn, the disguised brigand had given orders to his band to waylay the travellers on their journey thither, and to possess themselves, not only of the gold, but also of the lady's handsome jewels; and he had also bidden two of the gang to follow him to the inn of Terracina,

to give him an account of their raid.

These two rogues, whose names were Beppo and Giacomo, now told their daring leader that they had stopped the English travellers at the spot agreed

upon; but though they had easily secured the diamonds and other jewels, they declared they had been unable to find the gold. On hearing this, Fra Diavolo was disappointed and perplexed, but declaring that he would quickly discover the whereabouts of the money, he bade the bandits retire to

the barn to await his further orders.

As the two rascals departed, Lady Allcash entered the parlour, announcing carelessly that her husband was resting, and, being somewhat dull, she had come to indulge in a little conversation with the charming Marquis; and the disguised bandit, determined to make the most of this fortunate circumstance, plunged at once into another amiable flirtation with the frivolous lady. They were, however, quickly interrupted by the angry husband, who had no intention of being supplanted by a mere stranger; but the pretended Marquis, with careless ease, refused to quarrel, and cleverly inveigled the duped one into friendly conversation.

With great cunning he expressed sympathy with Lord Allcash in the loss of his valuables, enquiring casually if he had managed to save the large sum of gold he had been conveying to Leghorn; and with conceited pride, the Englishman replied that his own wits had served him in this matter. Having heard that bandits were in the neighbourhood, he had changed all the gold into bank-bills, which he had caused to be sewn up in the coat he was wearing, and also in the large sleeves of his lady's gown, and by this simple ruse he had managed

to cheat the robbers.

Whilst they were talking together, and Fra Diavolo was inwardly rejoicing at the information he had gleaned, approaching footsteps were heard outside, and next moment, Lorenzo and his carbineers hurried into the inn, exclaiming that they had gained a victory. Having cut off the brigands' retreat, they had caught the whole band in an ambush, and, attacking them unawares, had quickly killed twenty

of their number, after which the remainder had fled

away in a panic.

Zerlina, who had also returned, quickly hastened to the side of her lover, rejoicing to see him again so soon; but Lorenzo declared that they must set off again immediately, for they had not yet captured the leader of the band, and could not rest until that deed was accomplished. He had, however, good news for Lord Allcash, whose lost valuables he had himself recovered from one of the bandits: and to the great delight of the travellers, he placed their jewels before them once more.

Lady Allcash now announced that Lorenzo was entitled to the reward offered for the recovery of the jewels, and demanding her husband's pocket-book, which he had already replenished from his hidden store of bank-bills, she took therefrom a note for a thousand ducats, and handed it to the young brigadier. Overjoyed at the good fortune that had so suddenly made him even richer than his rival Francesco. Lorenzo clasped Zerlina in his arms with delight, knowing now that there was nothing to keep them apart; and declaring that he should return on the morrow to wed her, in spite of the farmer, he hurried off with his men to search for the brigand chief.

All this time the disguised Fra Diavolo had been gnashing his teeth with rage, inwardly furious at the defeat of his band, and vowing vengeance for the death of his brave rogues, yet outwardly compelled to preserve the unconcerned demeanour of the gay Marquis; but as soon as an opportunity occurred, he slipped from the inn and made his way to the barn where Beppo and Giacomo had been lodged

for the night.

He quickly arranged a scheme for again robbing the English travellers of their jewels, and also of the bank-bills hidden in their clothing; and having bidden the bandits to join him a short time later, he returned to the inn parlour to gather further in-formation for the perfecting of his plans.

It was now getting late into the night, and at last Zerlina led Lord and Lady Allcash to their sleepingchamber, which lay beyond her own; and in answer to the lady's request, she remained a little while to

assist her in disrobing.

Whilst the maiden was thus absent, her own chamber was entered by the supposed Marquis, who had discovered that this was the only means by which the English lord's apartment could be reached; and creeping on tiptoe to the window, he opened it to admit Beppo and Giacome, who were now waiting outside. Informing them in a whisper that they would have to wait until the girl had also retired to rest before they could accomplish their purpose, the bandit captain led them towards a large lumber-cupboard, with glass doors, at one end of the room; and here the three concealed themselves just as Zerlina returned.

Having already ascertained that all in the house had retired to rest, Zerlina at once prepared for bed; and as she undressed, she sang softly to herself, for joy was in her heart. She knew that her father would no longer refuse her in marriage to her beloved Lorenzo, since the brigadier had now a fortune even larger than Francesco's, and she felt that the young farmer could soon be persuaded to resign a bride

who would never have loved him.

Catching sight of her pretty figure in the mirror on her dressing-table, she was suddenly struck with her own good looks, and with a thrill of innocent pleasure she uttered aloud a few words of admiration for the charming reflection before her, to the great amusement of the hidden bandits, who kept indulging in sly peeps through the glass doors of the cupboard, and could hear every word uttered in the room beyond. Several times they nearly betrayed their presence; but Zerlina was too much occupied with her own pleasant thoughts to think of any lurking danger. She was soon ready for rest; and having uttered a prayer for protection during

the night, she put out the light and retired to bed.

Having waited until the maiden's regular breathing assured them that she was asleep, Fra Diavolo and his two rascals crept forth from their hidingplace and made their way towards the door of Lord Allcash's apartment; but on passing the bed. Beppo suggested in a whisper that they ran a great risk in leaving Zerlina free to rouse the household, should she be awakened by any noise they might make. Fra Diavolo replied that if he had any such fear, he had better silence the maiden once and for all; and seizing his dagger, Beppo crept to the bedside.

But just as he raised his arm to strike, Zerlina murmured softly in her sleep, repeating the sweet childish words of her simple prayer, and the brigand, conscience-stricken, let his arm fall limply to his

side again.

At that moment a loud knocking was heard outside at the inn door, and the voice of Lorenzo shouted eagerly for admission; and finding that their enterprise must now be delayed a little longer, Fra Diavolo and his companions quickly withdrew to the cupboard once more, just as Zerlina, awakened by the noise, sprang out of bed.

Hastily dressing herself, the girl ran to open the window, and discovering to her joy that Lorenzo and his carbineers were waiting below, she threw a key down to her lover, bidding him let the men into the kitchen. She then finished dressing, and was just about to go below, when Lorenzo, impatient to greet her, entered the room; and almost at the same time Lord Allcash issued forth in hasty attire from the chamber beyond, indignantly demanding the cause of the disturbance.

Lorenzo explained that he and his men had hopes of soon securing Fra Diavolo, for after pursuing him in a wrong direction on the hillsides for some time, they had casually learnt from a peasant that their quarry had been seen on the Terracina road. They had consequently retraced their steps, but deeming it necessary for his men to have a few hours' rest, having been long on the march, he had called in at Matteo's hostelry for that purpose. Zerlina quickly ran off to provide the carbineers with food, but Lord Allcash detained the brigadier a few minutes longer to listen to a pompous tirade against a country where peaceful travellers were set upon by brigands in the daytime, and roused thus rudely from their slumbers at night. Suddenly they were startled by a loud noise within the cupboard, for Beppo, by an awkward movement, had accidentally overturned some heavy object he had not noticed in the darkness. Fra Diavolo, however, was in stantly ready with a subtle scheme to save the situation, and as Lorenzo and Lord Allcash crossed to the cupboard to discover the cause of the noise, he stepped forth, coolly smiling and bowing with the easy grace of the brilliant Marquis.

In answer to the indignant questions poured upon him, he blandly declared that he had concealed himself in the cupboard to keep a tender assignation; and by the aid of his clever wit, he led the Englishman to suppose that his intended meeting was to have been with Lady Allcash, whilst Lorenzo imagined that Zerlina was the expected fair one.

The young brigadier, filled with grief at this seeming proof of Zerlina's defection, instantly challenged the man he supposed to be her lover to a mortal duel, a challenge which was gaily accepted by the pretended Marquis, who arranged to meet him at seven o'clock next morning in a rocky pass near by.

Lady Allcash, attracted by the angry voices, now appeared on the scene, only to be met by indignant upbraidings from her outraged husband; and when Zerlina presently returned to announce that food was ready below, Lorenzo turned coldly aside and refused even to speak to her.

All was now confusion and dismay; and in the midst of the general disturbance, Fra Diavolo and

his companions managed to escape unobserved from the inn.

Bidding Beppo and Giacomo return to the barn, and there await his further instructions, which he would convey to them next morning in a note concealed in a hollow tree near the inn, the bandit captain hastened to his familiar haunts on the mountain-side, and there, with the remnant of his scattered band, he arranged a third plot for the capture of the English travellers' wealth. It was decided that when Lorenzo came to keep his appointment for the duel in the rocky pass, he should be instantly surrounded and killed by a few ambushed rascals, and that when all the party from the inn had departed to the village church for Zerlina's wedding, and the carbineers had started on their march, the captain and remainder of the band should make a quiet raid on the hostelry and possess themselves of the treasure they had so long desired. Having completed his plans, Fra Diavolo wrote them down on a note for Beppo and Giacomo, bidding them to give him notice directly the inn was deserted by ringing the bell of a little hermitage on the hillside; and this message he slipped into the hollow tree agreed upon.

Just before seven o'clock next morning Matteo arrived at the inn with the young farmer, Francesco, and the rest of the wedding party, and poor Zerlina, who had vainly tried to learn the cause of Lorenzo's sudden coldness to her, was filled with despair. Seeing that the young brigadier was just about to depart with his carbineers in search of the brigand chief, and was making no attempt to prevent her marriage with Francesco, she ran to him once again, imploring him to say in what way she had offended him; and Lorenzo, still believing her to be false, at last declared in tones of suppressed anger that she had betrayed him by concealing another lover in her chamber the night before. He then hastened away to place himself at the head of the troop, remember-

ing his appointment with the Marquis at seven o'clock; and his distracted sweetheart was left more

mystified than ever.

At that moment, however, her attention was attracted by the two vagabonds, Beppo and Giacomo, who were drinking together at a little side-table close beside her; for having secured the captain's note, they were now awaiting the opportunity to carry out his instructions. Seeing Zerlina approach, Beppo nudged his companion, reminding him that this was the same pretty maid they had watched at her toilet the previous evening, and carried away by the amusing recollection, he repeated in a loud whisper the words of admiration she had uttered when standing before the mirror.

Every word of this careless whisper was heard by Zerlina, who was filled with amazement, and feeling sure that some mysterious plot was on foot, she called aloud to the carbineers to seize the two tramps, declaring they had just repeated certain words she remembered to have uttered when she believed her-

self alone in her chamber the night before.

Instantly the two rogues were seized, in spite of their struggles to escape, and as the carbineers searched them for proof of their guilt, they found the note containing the whole of Fra Diavolo's cun-

ning plot.

Lorenzo, determined that the famous robber should not escape his hands this time, quickly decided to catch him in his own trap; and bidding the wedding guests retire within the inn, he ordered the carbineers to conceal themselves on the hillside down which Fra Diavolo intended to come. He next dispatched Beppo to toll the hermitage bell, with two soldiers hidden close by, covering him with their carbines; and then, concealing himself behind some bushes with Zerlina and Lord and Lady Allcash, he waited to see the result of his ruse.

The wretched Beppo, not daring to disobey the command given him, began to toll the hermitage

bell, and almost immediately afterwards Fra Diavolo appeared on the hilltop. Although now attired in the gorgeous garb of a brigand chief, the hidden watchers instantly recognised him as the gay Marquis who had successfully deceived them all, and, amazed at the discovery, Lorenzo's contrite eyes sought Zerlina's in a silent appeal for forgiveness, whilst Lord and Lady Allcash joined hands in token of renewed good-fellowship.

Seeing that Beppo still tolled the bell undisturbed, Fra Diavolo concluded that all was well, and gaily descended the hillside with confidence; but at a sign from Lorenzo, the carbineers sprang suddenly from their ambush, and seized him ere he had time to realise his danger. In another moment his arms were tightly bound and shackled, and as he was led away between two files of carbineers, a loud cry of triumph arose from the spectators now assembled below, who all rejoiced together at the capture of the dreaded bandit.

A few hours later, Zerlina's wedding was celebrated in the little village church, and the happy bridegroom who joined hands with her that day was not Francesco the farmer, but Lorenzo, the proud vanquisher of the famous Fra Diavolo.

THE BOHEMIAN GIRL

ONE bright summer day, towards the end of the eighteenth century, high revels were being held in the little city of Presburg, on the Danube; for a merry troup of Austrian soldiers had just returned from the wars, flushed with success, and elated by their victorious invasion of the fair, but unhappy land of Poland.

The gayest scene of all took place in the beautiful grounds before the castle of Count Arnheim, their leader, for here preparations were being made for a great hunt, and the retainers and peasants on the estate were merry-making in honour of their lord's return.

Count Arnheim, accompanied by a number of neighbouring nobles whom he had invited to join in the chase, presently came forth from the castle, and as soon as he appeared, a loud shout of welcome arose from the whole party of holiday-makers.

Amongst these brilliant newcomers was the Count's nephew, Florestein, a conceited, foppish young man, whose gorgeous appearance was only surpassed by his foolish conversation; and in and out amongst the guests tripped little Arline, the heiress of Arnheim—a lovely child, who was the joy of her widowed father's heart.

The Count gravely acknowledged the hearty welcome accorded to him with a sad smile, for since the death of his beautiful young wife a deep melancholy had settled upon him, and the only joy he now knew was his love for his only child, Arline, who alone could comfort him. He did not care to



BALL

join in the chase, but having seen that his noble guests had all they needed for their sport, he tenderly caressed his beloved child once more, and returned to the castle.

The huntsmen was sounded their lively bugle calls, and when all were ready, the brilliant cavalcade moved off, climbing the hillsides, and disappearing behind the rocks and trees. The little Arline, after much coaxing, at length persuaded her attendant maid, Buda, to allow her to follow the hunters a short distance; and since all the retainers and peasants had also rushed off to watch the sport, the castle grounds were left quite deserted for a time.

Presently, a handsome young stranger, dressed in the garb of a Polish officer, ran into the gardens in a breathless and exhausted state, seeking a hidingplace; for a band of Austrian soldiers, whose vigilance the proscribed exile could no longer elude, were now close upon his track, and every moment he expected them to come in sight.

Poor Thaddeus of Poland! A scion of a noble family, he had bravely fought and bled for the freedom of his country, as a true patriot; but now, defeated and pursued, he wandered forth homeless, without friends or fortune, and his only hope to

find some place of present shelter.

A statue of the Austrian emperor before the entrance to the castle warned the unhappy exile that he was on the very threshold of his enemies, and that this was no safe haven for him; and, full of despair, he was just about to make his escape, when a band of wild-looking gipsies suddenly swarmed into the grounds from the woodland glade, and quickly surrounded him.

The sight of these merry gipsies brought a sudden hope of safety to the wretched Thaddeus, and turning to their leader, a light-hearted, clever rogue rejoicing in the name of Devilshoof, he cried out eagerly: "Let me join your ranks! I am a homeless wanderer, without country, friends, or fortune, but I have youth, strength, and courage, which I will expend in your service if you will save me from my

enemies, who are even now upon me!"

Devilshoof and his gipsy companions were so pleased with the boldness of the hapless young stranger that they were glad enough to let him join their ranks; and as his pursuers could already be seen approaching, they quickly stripped off his soldier's garb and dressed him in gay gipsy clothes. Whilst this quick change was being made, a roll of parchment with a seal attached fell to the ground, and Thaddeus, as he hastily snatched it up and hid it within his bosom, explained that it was his commission, from which he would never be parted, since it was the sole proof of his noble birth.

He had only just time to mingle with the other gipsies when the Austrian soldiers, who had pursued him so long, entered the grounds, and demanded news of the fugitive; but upon the wily Devilshoof carelessly announcing that a young Polish officer had passed up the hillside only a few minutes ago,

they dashed off in that direction at once.

As they vanished out of sight, the triumphant Devilshoof seized the hand of Thaddeus in token of comradeship, swearing to befriend him all his life; and then he gaily led him off to watch the chase.

followed by the rest of the gipsy band.

Meanwhile, the great hunt was going forward with much spirit, lively bugle calls sounding in every direction; but suddenly loud cries of alarm came from the woods, and a crowd of peasants rushed into the grounds, all talking at once, and seemingly full of distress. Upon the heels of this crowd came Thaddeus in his gipsy dress, and seeing that the people seemed distraught, he demanded what was wrong.

Learning from their excited cries that the little child, Arline—whom he had already seen and admired in the woods—had been set upon by an infuriated stag, he was filled with dismay, and snatching up a rifle that lay on a seat near by, he hurried off to her aid. He quickly reached the spot, and killed the maddened animal, and then he returned to the grounds with the rescued child and her terrified attendant.

The wild cries of the peasants quickly brought Count Arnheim upon the scene, and on learning of the danger his precious child had been in, he clasped her in his arms with great relief. Seeing, however, that her arm had been wounded by the stag's horns, he bade the nurse carry her within doors, and attend to her hurts; and then, turning to Thaddeus, he seized his hand, and poured forth words of gratitude upon him for saving the life of his beloved child, who was the one joy of his lonely heart.

On being next invited by the Count to partake of refreshment and join in the festivities, Thaddeus at first proudly refused, remembering that these were the enemies of his country; but the merry guests would not accept his refusal, and goodnaturedly dragged him off to the refreshment tables that had been laid out near the castle steps. Here the company seated themselves, whilst a troupe of dancers went through a mazy figure before them; and presently the little Arline, with her wounded arm now bound up, appeared at an upper window with her nurse, to watch the revels.

When the wine-glasses had all been filled, the Count rose from his seat and invited his guests to drink the health of their Emperor; but, though everyone else rose to do honour to the pledge, Thaddeus remained seated, and did not touch his glass. The young fop, Florestein, soon noticed his attitude, and pointed it out to his uncle, and Count Arnheim immediately filled up another goblet and handed it to Thaddeus, challenging him to drink loyally to the

health of the Emperor.

But the heart of Thaddeus was full of rage against

the invader of his beloved Poland, and in answer to the Count's challenge, he seized the glass and dashed it to pieces at the foot of the Emperor's statue. Instantly there arose a chorus of indignation, and the guests leaped upon Thaddeus with drawn swords: and at the same moment. Devilshoof, the gipsy leader, who had been watching the scene for some time, sprang forward to protect his new comrade.

The enraged guests instantly attacked Thaddeus and Devilshoof, with intent to kill them both, but at a word from Count Arnheim, the huntsmen and retainers dragged the two gipsies apart, and marched them off in different directions. Thaddeus was led away towards the woods, where, however, he soon broke from his captors, and escaped to his gipsy friends; but Devilshoof was taken into the castle and locked in an upper room.

After this the guests settled down to their festivities once more, and the dancing and games continued

with great merriment.

The waiting-maid, Buda, left her little charge for a short time, and went out into the grounds to assure the Count that his child was now recovering from her fright; and whilst she was away, the gipsy,

Devilshoof, took his revenge for capture.

Having escaped from his prison chamber during the absence of the guards, and reached the castle roof, he gently lowered himself down to the open window of Arline's room, and stepping on to the sill, he entered, and shut the window behind him. He then snatched up the little child, and hurried from the room with her, and making his way along the deserted passages, escaped through a side door with his prize.

None of the revellers had noticed the gipsy's daring climb from the roof, and when Buda presently returned to Arline's chamber and found it empty, she was filled with amazement. Wildly she searched in every room, and then, uttering loud cries of alarm, she rushed outside, declaring that the child had been stolen. Quickly the nobles rushed into the castle, and finding that the captive gipsy had also vanished, they knew well enough that he had

carried off the child in revenge.

When the Count heard the terrible news, he uttered a cry of despair, and at that moment, Devilshoof appeared on the hillside carrying Arline in his arms, and stifling her cries as he sprang from rock to rock. With a shout of rage, Count Arnheim and the nobles sprang after the spoiler, but Devilshoof ran to a deep gorge between two rocky cliffs, and having crossed over the tree-trunk that served as a bridge, he kicked it down into the gulf below, so that none might follow him further.

His baffled pursuers then took up their rifles, but the cunning gipsy held the little Arline in front of him, and they dared not fire. Count Arnheim, in a frenzy of despair, was about to fling himself into the gorge, but his guests seized his arms, and whilst they carried him back senseless to the castle, Devilshoof, still holding the child as a shield, made his escape, and vanished into the depths of the forest.

Twelve years had passed away, and the gipsy tribe, after many wanderings, were again encamped in the city of Presburg. On the open side of a quiet street the tent of the gipsy queen was pitched; and here, one moonlit summer night, Arline lay sleeping, whilst Thaddeus watched beside her.

All was quiet and peaceful, for it was growing late, and only one inn kept its lights burning; but presently a party of gipsies, wrapped in dark cloaks, entered the street, headed by the bold Devilshoof, who had brought them there to rob the late revellers as they left the inn. Quietly they crouched in the shadows and dark corners to await their prey; and in a short time their patience was rewarded, for a gorgeously-clad figure soon issued from the inn, and staggered down the street with uneven steps. This

was Florestein, the foppish nephew of Count Arnheim, who, regarding himself as the heir of his wealthy uncle since the kidnapping of his little cousin Arline, squandered his own fortune recklessly, and spent all his time in feastings and revellings.

Seeing in this foolish roysterer an easy and profitable victim, Devilshoof accosted him at once, calling his companions about him at the same time; and in a few minutes they had stripped him of every valuable he had carried, for Florestein, being a coward as well as a fop, was too terrified even to

cry out.

Having possessed himself of a rich jewelled medallion and chain, Devilshoof made his escape, leaving his companions to finish what he had begun; but whilst the exulting gipsies were eagerly dividing their spoils, another cloaked figure suddenly appeared in their midst. Full of surprise and dismay, they started back, for the cloaked figure was that of their own gipsy queen, and they could read anger in her mien.

With a haughty gesture she bade them instantly restore all they had stolen from their victim, and not daring to disobey her command, the gipsies sullenly handed back the rings, chains, and other

jewels they had been so eager to secure.

"Is that all?" demanded the queen, and Florestein, in a voice trembling with fright, replied that he yet lacked a handsome gold medallion, set with diamonds, worth all the rest. The gipsies explained that Devilshoof had gone off with this jewel as his prize; and then the queen led Florestein away, saying she would protect him, to a place of safety, and beckoning to the gipsies to follow her.

When the street was quiet once more, Arline, who had been awakened by the noise, arose and came forth from the tent into the moonlight, followed by Thaddeus. These two had grown to be lovers during the years that had passed, and they only awaited the

gipsy queen's pleasure to join their hands in

marriage.

Arline had no knowledge of her noble birth, though she had always felt herself to be different from the careless gipsies with whom she lived, and to-night, as she stood in the moonlight, she told Thaddeus of a dream she had just awakened from, which seemed to bear a message for her. She had dreamt that she dwelt in marble halls, amidst great riches and splendour, bearing a high ancestral name; that countless suitors sought her hand; and yet, which charmed her most of all, that Thaddeus still loved her just the same.

When her story came to an end she begged her lover to tell her the secret of her birth, for she felt that he knew it, since he had already told her that a certain scar upon her arm had been caused by the charge of a wild stag, from which danger he had saved her years ago; but for answer Thaddeus only showered kisses upon her, for he knew full well that if he disclosed her true birth they must be

parted.

Whilst they were thus folded in each other's arms, the gipsy queen—who also loved Thaddeus—suddenly returned, and, advancing towards Arline, angrily demanded how she thus dared to aspire to the love of one who was the chosen lover of her queen. But Arline was not afraid of her rival's anger; and standing aside, she said that Thaddeus should choose between them. Instantly Thaddeus folded her in his arms again, and then Arline, with a triumphant smile, turned towards the other gipsies who had now gathered round, and declared that it was their desire to be wed. Then Devilshoof, whose delight it was to make mischief and stir up jealousy, reminded the queen that it was her duty and right as a ruler of the tribe to join the hands of those of her subjects who desired to be united; and the queen, afraid of losing her authority should she refuse, came slowly forward, and haughtily placed the hand

of Arline in that of Thaddeus, according to the

gipsy custom of betrothal.

But she was full of inward disappointment and rage, and when Arline and Thaddeus presently wandered off in the moonlight, she turned upon Devilshoof, and passionately accused him of having brought this evil hour upon her, declaring she would only pardon him on condition that he yielded up to her the jewelled medallion he had stolen that night.

Devilshoof, though he feared naught else, dared not disobey the queen of his tribe, so he delivered up the medallion, but muttered vengeance as he strode away. The gipsy queen also thought of revenge; and as she hid the jewel in her dress, she laid a cunning plan for bringing trouble upon her

rival by means of it.

Next day a great fair was held in Presburg, and all the gipsy tribe went to join in the revels. Arline and the other Bohemian maids took their tambourines, and sang and danced for the amusement of the holiday-makers; and many of the gay youths of the town sought to obtain favours from the pretty strangers.

Amongst these revellers was the fop, Florestein, decked in all his bravest attire, who was greatly struck with the beauty and grace of Arline; and seeing her standing alone one time, he swaggered up and made flattering remarks to her. Finding that his foolish speeches were not listened to, he next tried to snatch a kiss, but to his surprise and dismay, Arline turned sharply round upon him and boxed his ears!

As he turned away, angry and discomfited, the gipsy queen, who had been watching the scene, recognised him as the roysterer whom she had protected the night before, and running after Arline, she fastened the jewelled medallion round her neck, saying that it was a reward for her pretty conduct, but knowing full well that Florestein would soon see it, and accuse the girl of theft.

Having thus carried out the evil plan she had laid, the queen left the fair ground, and soon afterwards the rest of the tribe departed also. But just as Thaddeus and Arline were moving away, Florestein caught sight of his medallion hanging round the maiden's neck; and hurrying forward, he loudly accused her of having stolen it from him, rejoicing to thus bring trouble upon one who had repulsed his advances. Arline indignantly defended herself, but at the command of Florestein, she was quickly surrounded by the city guards, who seized and bore her off in triumph to the Hall of Justice.

Here Count Arnheim sat, waiting to do justice on those offenders who should be brought before him that day; for his high position had made him the Chief Judge of the district. The twelve years that had gone by had aged him very much, for all his efforts to trace his stolen daughter had been in vain; but never for a moment had he altogether given up hope, and never did he cease to think of the sweet little maid who had been the only comfort of his

lonely heart.

He was thinking of her now as he sat in the Hall of Justice on the day of the fair; but presently his sad thoughts were rudely interrupted by the entrance of the city guards, with Arline in their midst, and

Florestein bringing up the rear.

With swaggering, self-satisfied demeanour, Florestein approached his uncle, and in angry, excited tones, accused Arline of having stolen his diamond medallion; but Count Arnheim, greatly struck with the beauty and innocent looks of the young girl, who reminded him strangely of his own lost child, begged her to defend herself.

Then Arline explained in clear, sweet tones that the jewel had been but a short time ago bestowed upon her by the gipsy queen, who, she now saw, had intended to bring trouble upon her by this very gift; and she proudly declared that, rather than be accused of such baseness as common theft, she would take her own life. She drew a dagger as she spoke, but ere she had raised her arm, Count Arnheim, whose chords of memory had again been touched by the maiden's sweet voice, sprang forward

and snatched the weapon from her hand.

His action was so sudden that Arline's loose sleeve slipped back from her elbow, disclosing the rough scar upon her white arm, and as the Count's gaze fell upon this wound mark, he turned suddenly pale, and in trembling accents demanded eagerly how she came by it. Full of surprise at his tone, Arline repeated the story of the maddened stag that Thaddeus had told to her, and Count Arnheim, knowing now beyond a doubt that this beautiful Bohemian maiden was indeed his long-lost child, clasped her in his arms with frantic joy, declaring to all that she was his beloved daughter.

And now Arline was quickly restored to the high position she had been born to; and as soon as the young girl had recovered from the strangeness of her new life, the proud and happy Count sent out invitations for a magnificent fête and ball, that he might introduce his lovely daughter to his friends

in fitting style.

But on the night of the ball, Arline, dressed in richest garments, sat alone in one of the splendid salons of the castle, with a sad look upon her face; for she was thinking of her faithful lover, Thaddeus, and felt that she could never enjoy her new prosperity unless he shared it with her. The Count and his foppish nephew had just left her, at her own request; and as they went off to receive the first guests, she knew that Florestein, whom she greatly despised, was already petitioning her hand in marriage.

With a heavy sigh, her thoughts turned quickly to the free and happy past; and at that moment, the low window of the salon was suddenly opened, and Devilshoof entered from the grounds beyond. He begged her not to be alarmed, since he had but

brought a message from his tribe, asking her to return to her old friends; and as he spoke, the window was opened again, and Thaddeus entered the room.

With a cry of joy, Arline rushed into her lover's arms, and when Thaddeus besought her to remember him sometimes, even amidst wealth and splendour, she declared that she cared naught for wealth and splendour unless he would love her still. As they stood there, folded in each other's arms, Count Arnheim's voice was heard as he conducted his guests towards the room; and Arline, fully aware that this was not the time to present her gipsy lover to her father, hastily thrust Thaddeus into a curtained recess, whilst Devilshoof escaped through the window.

In another moment Count Arnheim entered the salon with the early guests, and with a proud smile, took Arline by the hand, and introduced her to his noble friends.

Now, whilst Arline and Thaddeus had been rejoicing together, the gipsy queen had watched them without the window, with bitter rage and jealousy in her heart; for she still loved Thaddeus, and followed him wherever he went. She saw Arline hide him within the recess, and as the gaily-dressed guests afterwards trooped in, she quickly thought out a plan for revenging herself upon her rival. Opening the window, she softly entered the salon, and making her way to Count Arnheim, threw off her cloak, and declared that she had a message for him.

Greatly surprised at the appearance of this strange figure, the Count bade her speak on; and with a triumphant glance towards the now pale and trembling Arline, the gipsy queen cried: "The daughter you prize so fondly is deceiving you! She loves a gipsy of my tribe, and he is even now hidden in this room!"

She pointed to the recess as she spoke, and Count

Arnheim, stepping forward, drew aside the curtain, and Thaddeus appeared before the eyes of the

astonished guests.

Full of indignation and disappointment, the proud Count poured forth bitter reproaches upon the daughter he now felt to be unworthy of his love; and drawing his sword, he passionately bade

Thaddeus depart ere he took his life.

The gipsy queen seized Thaddeus by the hand, and triumphantly tried to drag him away with her; but Arline ran to her lover's side, and turning towards the bewildered guests, begged them to leave her alone with her father. When the guests had all retired to the salon beyond, and only her father and lover remained, she fell on her knees and implored the Count to consent to her marriage with Thaddeus, whom she loved so dearly, declaring that she would rather die than live without him; but the Count only exclaimed the more against the disgrace to his name should his daughter wed an outcast gipsy.

On hearing this, the ancestral pride of Thaddeus could no longer be restrained, and caring naught for the danger it might bring, he haughtily declared that he was of as equally pure and noble birth as the Count himself, even though he wore the garb of a gipsy. He then told the whole story of his exile from Poland, and his reason for joining the gipsy tribe, and drawing forth his commission, from which he had never departed, he handed it to the

Count as the proof of what he said.

Count Arnheim was greatly moved at the sad story told by the exile, and when he had glanced at the commission and read there that Thaddeus was indeed of noble birth, he took him by the hand, saying that the feuds of their countries should be forgotten, and that they should be friends. He then placed Arline's hand in that of Thaddeus, and the lovers embraced with great joy.

Meanwhile, the queen of the gipsies, who had left

the salon when the guests retired, had gone in search of a young gipsy whom she knew to be devoted to her service, and bidding him bring his musket and follow her, she once more crept round to the open window of the salon. With gleaming eyes she watched the three figures within, and then, when she saw the lovers folded in each other's arms, she turned to the gipsy at her side, and, in a transport of jealous rage, bade him shoot Thaddeus instantly.

But Devilshoof had also followed closely upon her track, suspecting her evil design, and just as the musket was raised, by a dexterous movement he diverted the young gipsy's aim, and turned the muzzle upon the queen. There was a loud report, and a shriek, and the queen of the gipsies fell to the ground, slain by the shot she had intended

for her lover.

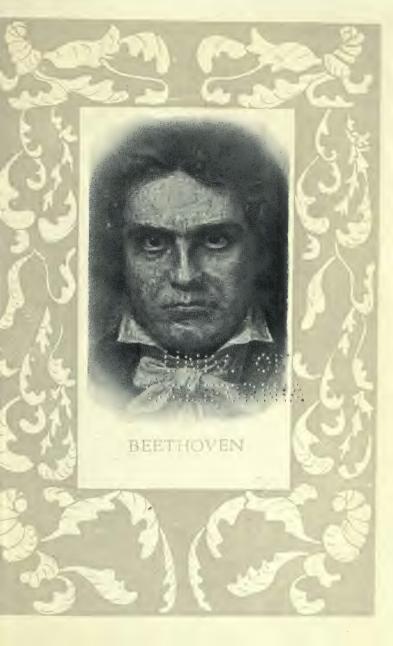
FIDELIO

ONE bright summer day, during the seventeenth century, in the courtyard of a certain prison castle in Spain, the jailer's daughter, a pretty girl, named Marcellina, stood ironing linen in the doorway of her father's lodge; and though not in reality pressed for time, it pleased her to make a great pretence of being very busy, in order to avoid the attentions of Jacquino, the porter of the prison, who was constantly passing to and fro, and engaging in conversation with her.

It was quite in vain, however, that the amorous porter tried to get the maiden interested in his pretty speeches, for pert Miss Marcellina would have none of him to-day, and was even cruel enough to hint that her thoughts were with some more favoured suitor elsewhere; and Jacquino felt himself very badly used. For until lately, he alone had been the favoured swain of this rustic coquette; but since the recent advent of a new assistant, a handsome youth rejoicing in the name of Fidelio, the jailer's pretty daughter had looked coldly upon her old sweetheart, and bestowed all her most bewitching smiles upon the newcomer.

It was of Fidelio she was thinking now, knowing that the youth would shortly be returning from an errand upon which he had been sent some hours before; and so, when a loud knock was presently heard at the outer gate, she was filled with joyful anticipation, and eagerly bade Jacquino unfasten the bolts at once, which the porter did very reluctantly

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Fidelio

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and with much grumbling at such untimely interruption to his own suit. He was somewhat grimly pleased, therefore, when, on opening the gate, he admitted Rocco, the jailer, instead of the new assistant; but even this small satisfaction was shortlived, for almost immediately afterwards, his rival, Fidelio, appeared, and so laden with packages and baskets, that Marcellina ran to relieve him of them at once, commiserating tenderly with him on being thus heavily laden on so hot a day.

Now, in reality, though none suspected it, Fidelio was not the person he represented himself to be, but instead a lady of high degree, who had thus taken on the disguise of a youth from a very noble motive. Within this prison castle there were a number of political prisoners, who, though innocent, were the victims of despotic power, and pined in captivity, because some private enemy refused to speak the

word that would have set them at liberty.

Amongst these prisoners was a certain Don Florestan, a nobleman, who, having had the misfortune to offend Don Pizarro, the governor of the fortress, had been by him accused of some slight political misdemeanour, and thrust into a deep dungeon of the prison. Having thus got his hated enemy into his power, the crafty Governor gave out shortly afterwards that he had died, so that he should not be released when his short time of imprisonment was over; and thus, by keeping him closely chained in the deepest dungeon, and slowly starving him, he hoped that the wretched man would really die, and his own private vengeance be thus satisfied without resort to actual violence.

However, his plans were to be frustrated from quite an unexpected source; for Don Florestan had a beautiful young wife, the Lady Leonora, who loved her husband so devotedly that, refusing to believe the report of his death, she determined to learn the truth at all costs, and, if he still lived, to rescue him from the hands of his unscrupulous enemy, Pizarro,

who she knew would not hesitate to murder him so soon as he could do so without fear of discovery.

Being of a brave and heroic disposition, Leonora was not afraid to risk her life for the sake of the man she loved; and so, having donned masculine attire, she boldly made her way to the fortress where her husband pined in captivity, and, giving her name as Fidelio, humbly requested the jailer to engage her as his assistant, hoping that in this way she would at last discover how Don Florestan was faring, and perhaps be able to plan some means of escape for him. Rocco, the jailer, being greatly struck with the pleasant looks and manners of the supposed youth, very willingly took her into his service; and, since the new assistant was neathanded, useful and obliging, he quickly became a favourite with all within the castle, to the great chagrin of Jacquino, who, being clumsy and somewhat dull, now found himself quite out of favour.

Poor Jacquino felt more aggrieved still when saucy Mistress Marcellina also showed preference for the newcomer, whose handsome face and air of melancholy attracted ber Janey, and caused her to treat her old sweetheart with disdain; and when discovering in addition that his master, Rocco, favoured his daughter's new choice, he felt justly jealous of the unknown stranger who had so coolly supplanted

him.

So to-day, as Marcellina and her father ran to relieve the supposed Fidelio of his burdens, Jacquino kept sulkily in the background; and presently he departed to perform some duties within the castle, determined to press his own suit at some more favourable time.

Rocco now began to praise his new assistant for the clever manner in which he had carried out his instructions that day; and to show his approval of this and of his conduct in general, he announced that he was quite willing to welcome such a likely youth as a son-in-law, since Marcellina seemed to regard him also with evident favour, and he even hinted at a very early date for the wedding-day.

Marcellina was delighted to hear this, and to know that her father favoured her fancy for her dear Fidelio; but Leonora was greatly embarrassed, not knowing how she could get safely out of this new difficulty, for though she had tried to ingratiate herself with the jailer's daughter for her own purposes, she did not wish to pain the maiden in any way.

However, she succeeded in hiding her embarrassment for the time being, and presently managed to direct the conversation into a safer channel, by begging Rocco to allow her to accompany him in his daily visits to the prisoners in the lower dungeons, and to assist him with this work, which the jailer had hitherto performed alone; for, in this way, she knew she would be able to discover if her beloved husband still lived, since she had not seen him amongst the more favoured prisoners, whom she was permitted to wait upon.

At first Rocco refused this plea, declaring that Fidelio was too young to witness such dreadful sights as these wretched chained captives, and to emphasize his refusal, described the miserable state of one of these, who was nearly at the point of death through close confinement and starvation; but when Leonora, on hearing this, redoubled her entreaties, feeling sure from the description that this unhappy prisoner must be her own dear husband, he at length consented, feeling better pleased than ever with the youth's evident desire to assist him even in such disagreeable duties as visiting the dungeon captives.

At this moment Don Pizarro, the cruel Governor of the prison, entered the courtyard with some of the guard; and, after giving orders to the captain, he proceeded to read the despatches brought from the town by Fidelio, and now handed to him by Rocco.

Amongst these despatches, Pizarro found a missive warning him that the Prime Minister intended

to pay a surprise visit to the prison that evening, having been informed that certain victims of despotic power were still unjustly held captives there; and, suddenly filled with fear at the thought of how he should account for the presence of Don Florestan, so long believed to be dead, he began to form a plan to avoid this new danger to himself, and soon decided to kill his hated enemy within the next few hours. However, he did not mean to do this dreadful deed himself, if possible; and so, when the guard had presently gone on duty, he detained Rocco, intending to make him his instrument of vengeance.

Carelessly handing the jailer a purse of gold, he hinted darkly that he desired the death of this wretched prisoner in the lowest dungeon; but Rocco, recoiling from the thought of such cold-blooded murder. refused to do the deed, although, being afraid of offending his unscrupulous superior, he tremblingly agreed to dig the victim's grave, if Pizarro himself would strike the fatal blow. With this the Governor was fain to be content; and the two departed separate ways, having first laid their plans and arranged that the grave should be dug beneath an old ruined cistern

at the side of the dungeon.

Now it happened that Leonora, having suspected from the dark looks of Pizarro that he intended ill to someone, had crept back to the courtyard, where she had remained hidden in such a position that she could overhear the conversation between the Governor and Rocco; and filled with horror at the thought of the violent death now destined for the unhappy prisoner, whom she felt sure was her own beloved husband, she determined to rescue him that evening if possible, and hurried after Rocco, in order to be with him wherever he should go, and so learn all his plans.

Later on, she returned with the jailer to the courtvard, where she discovered Marcellina and Jacquino engaged in a lively dispute; and, finding that the squabble was about herself as the supposed Fidelio,

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whom Jacquino regarded as a rival and Marcellina desired as a new sweetheart, she hastily changed this embarrassing subject by entreating Rocco to allow the more privileged prisoners to walk for a short time in the courtyard to enjoy a breath of fresh air, a request he had several times promised to grant when a suitable opportunity should occur. As Marcellina also added her entreaties to this kindly request, hoping to please her dear Fidelio by so doing, Rocco agreed, promising to keep Pizarro engaged for a short time on business at the other end of the fortress; and so, when he had departed, Jacquino and Leonora unlocked the cells, and invited the wretched inmates to walk outside for a while.

Full of gratitude for this unexpected pleasure, the prisoners poured forth into the courtyard, walking about with slow painful steps, but uttering cries of delight at the sight of the brilliant sunshine, and inhaling the fresh summer air with deep thankful-

ness.

Presently, Rocco returned, and informed the new assistant that Pizarro had consented to his helping him in the duties of attending upon the dungeon captives, and that he should begin that day by helping to dig the grave for the victim who was to die so soon as it was ready; and Leonora was filled with conflicting emotions, joyful at the thought of meeting her beloved one again, should the captive indeed prove to be her husband, but terrified by the pros-

pect of her dreadful task.

Whilst they were still talking together, Pizarro unexpectedly appeared on the scene; and, enraged at the sight of the captives walking in the courtyard, he poured forth angry abuse upon Rocco for daring to permit such a thing. The jailer, however, stopped this outburst by reminding Pizarro of the dark deed he was presently to assist him with; and, anxious to keep on good terms with one who knew his wicked plans, the Governor ceased to bluster, but gave orders for the prisoners to be once more locked up.

When the wretched captives had returned reluctantly to their cells, uttering deep sighs of regret as they quitted the bright sunshine for the gloomy darkness of the prison, Rocco called the supposed Fidelio to one side; and, laden with spades and pickaxes, they made their way to the deepest dungeon to

commence their gruesome task.

Little dreaming that the one person in all the world he most longed to see, his beloved wife, was even now approaching, Don Florestan lay suffering upon the floor of his horrible cell, with despair in his heart; for he had now been so long without food, and was so terribly exhausted, that he knew death could not be far off. All hope of escape had long since deserted him, and he had quite resigned himself to his fate, looking forward to death as the end of his sufferings; but even now the image of his beautiful Leonora shone brightly in his heart, and every now and again he would breathe her name tenderly, and stretch forth his arms with a loving gesture, as though about to embrace her visionary form, or call a passionate greeting to her, thinking in his wandering delirium that she indeed stood before him.

Just as he sank back exhausted after one of these flights of feverish fancy, Rocco the jailer entered the dungeon, followed by the trembling Leonora, who shivered as she felt the chill, damp air of the subterranean cell, and glanced apprehensively at the huddled form on the ground, fearing, yet hoping.

that it would prove to be her husband.

Rocco at once proceeded to the ruined cistern situated at one side of the dungeon, and, taking his spade and pickaxe, began to dig the grave, calling to his assistant to do likewise, speaking in gruff but not unkindly tones, thinking that the youth's evident reluctance to commence the horrid task was due to the softness natural to his tender years, rather than to any deeper feeling.

At length, however, Leonora, in order to keep up her disguise, took her spade and began to assist in Fidelio 35

the work; but every now and again, she turned her eyes upon the crouching form of the poor prisoner,

who appeared to be sleeping.

Presently, however, Don Florestan raised his head, and addressed the jailer; and Leonora, seeing now that he was indeed her own beloved husband, was so overcome that she sank back in a swoon. Rocco, not noticing the agitation of his assistant, approached the prisoner, who demanded, as he had already done many times before, the name of the tyrant whose cruelty thus doomed him to a living death. Rocco, knowing that the poor man was to die within the next hour, felt that there could now be no harm in granting this request; so he told Florestan that his enemy was Don Pizarro, the Governor of the prison.

The name of Pizarro recalled Leonora's wandering senses; and still keeping her face hidden from Florestan, she tried to persuade Rocco to permit her to give the captive some bread she had brought with her for this purpose. Though the jailer at first refused, his own pity for the wretched prisoner at length got the better of him, and he gave his consent, even making him drink a little wine from a small flagon

he had himself brought.

No sooner had Florestan eagerly partaken of the welcome food, which quickly brought back some little strength to his weary frame, than the dreaded Pizarro entered the dungeon, his first words being to bid Rocco send his youthful assistant away. Leonora, however, though she pretended to obey, only retired into the shadows of the dungeon; and then Pizarro, flinging open his cloak, and drawing his dagger, strode towards the prisoner, and in cruel, triumphant tones bade him prepare to die, hoping to see him fall on his knees and beg for mercy.

But Florestan, who had now risen to his feet, bravely drew himself up to his full height with quiet dignity; and his look of calm contempt so exasperated the wicked Pizarro, that he sprang forward immediately, intending to stab him to the heart. Ere he could strike, however, Leonora flung herself upon him, and bade him desist; and as Pizarro, taken by surprise, drew back, she now boldly declared herself to be the wife of his intended victim.

Florestan, seeing the face of the supposed youth for the first time, was amazed to recognise his beloved Leonora; and full of joy, even in this awful moment of danger, the long separated husband and wife em-

braced tenderly.

Pizarro, enraged at this untimely interruption of his evil plans, and knowing that he had little time to lose, since his superior officer would arrive very shortly, sprang forward again, intending to stab them both; but Leonora, in a flash, drew forth a loaded pistol she had concealed in her garments, and, covering him with it, declared she would fire if he

moved a step further.

Chagrined, and completely nonplussed at this sudden turning of the tables upon him, Pizarro stood helpless, glaring furiously upon the brave Leonora; and as they stood thus, the sound of a trumpet was heard, and Jacquino, accompanied by several officers of the castle, appeared in the doorway, announcing that Don Fernando, the Minister, had just arrived, and demanded an immediate interview with the Governor of the prison.

Pizarro, baulked of his prey, and feeling that disaster was about to fall on him, yet not daring to disobey the command of his superior, turned angrily

on his heel, and left the cell.

When their enemy had departed, Florestan and Leonora again fell into each other's arms, and rejoiced together, full of gladness at meeting once more, and hopeful that their troubles would now shortly come to an end; and then as soon as the exhausted Count had sufficiently recovered, Rocco escorted them both to the large court of the castle, where the Minister, Don Fernando, surrounded by soldiers and officers, was receiving the thanks of the

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grateful captives, whom he had just ordered to be set free, knowing that they had unjustly been kept in bonds.

The jailer, eager to bring his cruel master into disgrace, led Florestan and Leonora forward at once, and appealed to the Minister for justice; and Don Fernando, astonished at thus beholding the young Count, whom all had believed to be dead, received him with great kindness, and gave him a hearty welcome. Then, when he was told the whole story of Pizarro's infamous plot, and how it was frustrated by the intended victim's brave wife, he declared that Florestan was free from that moment, and that Leonora herself should have the joy of removing the chains that had been put so unjustly upon him.

When this pleasant task had been performed by the now happy Leonora, the whole assemblage were free to rejoice together, for all were glad at the downfall of the tyrant Pizarro. The released captives were glad because they were at liberty once more; Jacquino was glad because the dangerous Fidelio could no longer be a rival to his claim upon the pretty Marcellina, who was even now ready to smile on him again; and Florestan and his faithful Leonora were the most joyful of all, since they were restored to each other and a life of perfect peace and happiness.

LA SONNAMBULA

In a certain pretty village in Italy, the light-hearted peasants were gathered together one summer evening on the shady green, talking in groups as they waited to witness the betrothal of Elvino, a prosperous young farmer, and his fair sweetheart, Amina, whose nuptials were to be celebrated on the morrow. The wreaths and garlands of flowers for the wedding decorations were being merrily set up by willing hands, and the village already wore a gala air; for all were looking forward eagerly to the coming festivities, with the exception of one person, who alone refused to be joyful.

This was Lisa, the pretty young hostess of the village inn, who having once received attentions herself from the handsome Elvino, had felt slighted when he fixed his affections upon Amina, whose beauty and sweet winning ways had made her the belle of the village; and now, as she mingled with the merry throng on the green, she was filled with envy for the happy fate of the bride-elect, and could do nothing but make spiteful remarks about her rival, declaring her to be a mere nobody, and not

worthy of so great a piece of fortune.

For Amina was but a poor orphan, who had been brought up by Dame Teresa of the Mill, a worthy woman who had loved and cared for her as though she were her own child; but in spite of her unknown birth and dependent position, Amina was beloved by



BELLINI

all the villagers, whose hearts she had won by her many deeds of kindness. But Lisa's jealousy would not allow her to see any perfection in the gentle Amina; and so full of envy and disappointment did she feel just now that to all the remarks made to her by her devoted admirer, Alessio, she only returned snappish replies, which, however, disconcerted her swain but little. For Alessio was a merry, lively fellow, full of fun, and not easily discouraged; and having conceived a great admiration for the pretty but sharp-tongued Lisa, he was for ever coaxing her to marry him, and in spite of her many snubs, still felt confident of success in the end.

As they walked about the green this evening, he said again; "Come, Lisa, let us also sign our marriage contract whilst the Notary is here, and save

him the trouble of coming again!"

But to this cool suggestion, however, Mistress Lisa merely tossed her head, and turned impatiently away; and Alessio, nothing daunted, began to join heartily in the merry wedding song he had himself composed in honour of the day, which the villagers had just raised as the pretty Amina appeared on the green, accompanied by Dame Teresa.

When the song came to an end Amina thanked her friends in a gentle voice for their kindly wishes; and then, turning to Alessio and Lisa, she mischievously suggested that they should follow her example and

plight their troth with her that night.

"Tis just what I have been saying!" cried the irrepressible Alessio, gleefully. "Come, Lisa, say that you will, for I feel I must get married to-day, and if you won't have me, I'll have to marry Dame Teresa!"

All laughed merrily at this; but Lisa sulkily refused to join in the fun, for Elvino had now arrived, and the sight of his devoted attentions to Amina caused her jealousy and disappointment to smart afresh. The Notary having also now arrived with the marriage contract, the guests gathered around

a table which had been placed beneath the trees outside Dame Teresa's house; and Elvino and Amina, having signed their names to the paper, their

betrothal was thus formally concluded.

Just as the happy pair were receiving the congratulations of their friends, a strange cavalier—whose gay attire, aristocratic bearing, and deferential attendants proclaimed him to be a person of rank—approached the inn, and inquired of the bystanders if the landlord's château was near at hand; and on being informed that it was some little distance away, he announced his intention of passing the night at the inn.

On hearing this, Lisa, mindful of her duties as hostess, hurried forward officiously, and offered her best accommodation to the stranger; and then, having received some gallant compliments from her guest, who had an appreciative eye for a pretty face, she hastened within doors to make all ready, beam-

ing with pleasure.

The stranger was, however, more greatly struck with the beauty of Amina, to whom he next addressed himself, declaring that she reminded him of someone whom he had long since loved and lost; and so intense was his gaze, that after he had departed within the inn, Elvino, seized with a sudden pang of jealousy, reproached the maiden for having thus spoken with the newcomer. But Amina tenderly reassured her anxious lover, declaring that she loved but him alone; and the little cloud that had threatened to gather, now quickly vanished.

As they moved away happily together, Alessio presently came running out to announce that he had discovered the stranger to be none other than the Count Rodolpho, their own Lord of the Soil, whose château overlooked the village, and who had not visited his native place since he was a child; and upon hearing this interesting news, the villagers were all filled with great excitement, and, as they trooped away to their homes arranged to proceed

to the inn at break of day to sing a song of welcome to their Seigneur, and to show their joy at his arrival.

Some hours later, Count Rodolpho was conducted to the finest chamber which the old-fashioned inn afforded, and which, though it had the reputation of being haunted, he had laughingly insisted upon occupying, finding it quaint and comfortable; and before retiring for the night, though it was already late, Lisa appeared at the door, to ask if all his wishes had been attended to, and also to offer her respects

to him as her Seigneur.

The Count, being a gay cavalier, and accustomed to making conquests wherever he went, invited her to enter, thinking that a flirtation with his pretty hostess would pass the time pleasantly; and Lisa, nothing loath, but delighted at the impression she imagined she had made on her guest, was willing enough to accept his attentions. The Count's pretty speeches pleased her very well, nor did she object when he snatched a kiss or two; but, not daring to remain longer, since the night was advancing, she was just about to depart, when a strange interruption came. Just at that moment, a slight female figure, clad in a long white robe, softly entered the room, and walked slowly across the floor, speaking aloud, as though holding a conversation with some unseen person; and to the great amazement of the Count and Lisa, they saw that this mysterious nocturnal visitor was Amina, who, although her eyes were wide open, saw them not, since she was walking in her sleep. For, though unknown to anyone, and still less to herself, Amina was a somnambulist, and had quite unconsciously walked from her own home and entered through the unfastened door of the inn; and as Count Rodolpho now gazed in astonishment upon the maiden, whose lovely face had so interested him earlier in the evening, he was filled with a strange, deep emotion, and listened eagerly to the words she said, from which he gathered that she imagined herself speaking to Elvino, since she spoke reproachfully of his having for a moment doubted her faithful heart.

But Lisa, though at first alarmed, quickly saw in this unforeseen circumstance, a means for satisfying her petty spite against the orphan she despised; and, quickly making her escape from the room, she determined to seek out Elvino, and prove to him that his betrothed was base and unfaithful to him, since she had found her in the chamber of the Count Rodolpho.

Meanwhile, Amina continued to speak in tender accents of her love for Elvino; and, unconsciously taking the Count's hand in hers, she softly caressed

it, repeatedly avowing her passion.

Count Rodolpho watched the sleeping maiden with increasing emotion, feeling the charm of her ethereal beauty creeping over him like a spell; and at last, fearful of awakening her, and not daring to trust himself longer in her sweet presence, since, though her helplessness appealed to his chivalry, he felt drawn towards her by a strange attraction, he hastily left the room, and, leaving the inn at once, made his way to his own château.

After he had gone, Amina ceased to speak; and, presently sinking upon a couch, remained there in

peaceful slumber.

It was now daybreak; and the peasants, in accordance with the arrangement of the evening before, assembled in the inn, and, making their way to the Count's chamber, began to sing a joyous song of welcome, which they hoped would presently arouse him from his slumbers. Soon afterwards, Lisa entered the room with Elvino, whom she had brought to behold for himself his betrothed slumbering in the chamber of the stranger, cruelly and unjustly keeping from him the fact that Amina had walked there in her sleep.

Elvino, who had indignantly refused to believe her story, now uttered an exclamation of grief and despair on beholding what appeared to him the proof of Lisa's statement; and at that moment Amina, awakened by the singing, opened her eyes, and was quickly filled with amazement on beholding her unaccustomed surroundings. As she rose from the couch in bewilderment, Elvino burst forth into angry reproaches, declaring her to be faithless and base; and in spite of poor Amina's piteous assurances of innocence, since she could not explain how she came to be found in such a compromising situation, he spurned her with scorn, and, thrusting aside her

clinging arms, departed in anger.

Amina, overcome with grief and despair, sank sobbing into the arms of Dame Teresa, who, though not understanding the mystery, yet believed her to be innocent, and led her away with great tenderness; and the peasants then sadly dispersed, loath to think ill of the pretty maiden they loved so well, yet compelled to admit the evidence of their own eyes. But they were not satisfied; and later on in the day they set off to seek out Count Rodolpho in his château, and to learn what he knew of this strange matter, and if he had indeed enticed the poor girl to her ruin.

Meanwhile, Liza was triumphant; and, having thus succeeded in bringing disgrace and ignominy upon her rival, she sought out Elvino, who had wandered into the woods near the château, and tenderly offered words of comfort to him, and by encouraging his rage against Amina, led him artfully to think of renewing his vows to herself; and then wisely refraining from becoming too importunate, she left him to his own reflections again, and wandered alone down another glade. Here she was joined by the lively Alessio, who, after first bewailing the sad fate of Amina, made the brilliant suggestion that Lisa should marry him at once, so that the wedding decorations should not be wasted, a suggestion, however, which was again disdainfully flouted by the captious Lisa, who informed him that she already felt assured of eventually securing the more prosperous Elvino as a husband. Alessio, well used to

such rebuffs, and not the least disconcerted by this surprising announcement, still pressed his own claims; and then seeing that the peasants were approaching from the château, the wrangling pair set

off to join them.

Meanwhile, Amina, accompanied by the sympathetic Dame Teresa, had also sought solace for her woe in the woods; and presently coming face to face with the unhappy Elvino, she once more besought him to believe in her innocence. Elvino, though filled with emotion at beholding the maiden whom he believed had wronged him, still refused, however, to listen to her pleadings, and again turning from her with scorn and anger, hurried quickly away; and as Dame Teresa vainly endeavoured to comfort the now heart-broken girl, the peasants came in sight, headed by Count Rodolpho, who, having heard from them of Amina's sad plight, had now come to prove her innocence.

Full of compassion, he approached the half-fainting girl; and, seeing that she was utterly exhausted by the strain that had been put upon her, he bade Dame Teresa to take her into a neighbouring mill, and make her rest for a while, promising that in the meantime, he would seek out Elvino and try to convince him of the innocence of his betrothed.

When Dame Teresa had led the weary Amina into the mill, the peasants went to seek Elvino; and when they had at length found and persuaded him to return with them, the Count bade him be of good comfort and cease to mourn, since Amina was still worthy of his love. He then described to him that the maiden had entered his room the night before in her sleep, explaining that she was a somnambulist, and, as such, utterly unconscious of her actions at the time; but Elvino and the simple peasants, never before having heard of this strange phenomenon, were scarcely yet convinced, finding it difficult to realize such a curious circumstance, which had not come within their experience before.

But whilst they were still wondering at the story that had been told to them, they saw Amina softly approaching from the mill, passing them with wide-open, unseeing eyes, and uttering Elvino's name in loving accents; and, seeing that the maiden was again walking in her sleep, the Count explained this fact to the peasants, and bade them remain quiet until she should awaken.

Elvino, overjoyed at this final proof of his beloved one's innocence, could scarcely restrain his happy feelings, watching the lovely maiden's movements with eager interest; and when she presently awakened to full consciousness, he clasped her in his arms with joy, beseeching her to forgive him for doubting her faith.

Amina, full of happiness at thus learning that Elvino still loved her, and no longer believed her to be false, was soon restored to her accustomed gaiety; and so the reunited pair were wedded that same day ere the sun went down, amidst the great rejoicings of the villagers, who were filled with delight that the fair maiden they loved so well was now cleared from all reproach.

I PURITANI

During the great Civil War between the royal House of Stuart and the Parliament, at the time when Charles the Second was a fugitive, the fortress of Plymouth was held by the Parliamentary Army; and here the commander of the fortress, Lord Walton, a Puritan sternly devoted to the side he had espoused, had brought his lovely young daughter, Elvira, that she might be safe from the many dangers of that troublous time.

The sweetness and grace of Elvira quickly gained her many admirers; for even the sombre Puritans were not proof against the enthralling charms of

youth and beauty.

Amongst these admirers was Sir Richard Forth, a colonel in the Parliamentary forces; and being of good family and excellent repute amongst the Puritans, he met with a very favourable reception when he brought his suit to Lord Walton, who readily

accepted him as his future son-in-law.

Elvira, however, had already, unknown to her father, given her heart to a Cavalier officer, Lord Arthur Talbot, who held a high position in the Royalist Army; and when she was told that the Puritan officer had been accepted as her suitor, she was filled with dismay, knowing such a loveless marriage could bring nothing but misery, yet believing that her father would never consent to her union with her Cavalier lover.

In this dilemma, she confided her troubles to her

uncle, Lord George Walton, who, though a retired Puritan officer, yet remained in the fortress to assist his brother in the command; and this gentleman, who loved Elvira as his own child, was so deeply moved by her passionate appeal for his aid that he promised to use every endeavour in his power to bring about her union with the man she loved.

At first, Lord George was not successful in his interview with his brother on Elvira's behalf; for the stern Puritan officer had no desire to connect himself with a Cavalier family, and declared that he had already promised his daughter to Sir Richard Forth, who was in every way a suitable husband for

her.

When, however, his brother, who cared less for political and religious distinctions, declared that Elvira's highly-strung system and loving nature could never bear the tragedy of a loveless marriage, and that it would certainly break her heart should it be forced upon her, Lord Walton was no longer proof against such an appeal as this; for he was a devoted father, and loved his daughter with very tender affection. He therefore agreed that the undesired betrothal with Sir Richard Forth should be set aside at once; and he also signified his consent to Elvira's marriage with Lord Arthur Talbot, giving instructions for the young Cavalier to be admitted into the fortress on the morrow, that the nuptials might be celebrated there without further delay.

Elvira was filled with the utmost joy when her uncle brought her these glad tidings; and preparations for the wedding ceremony were commenced forthwith, so that a merry bustle was quickly set up

in the sombre castle.

The young Cavalier was also overjoyed at this happy turn of events; and he needed no second bidding to prepare for his wedding with the beautiful maiden he loved so well.

On his arrival at the fortress next morning, Lord

Arthur received a joyous welcome from all; for his many deeds of bravery and chivalry had won him universal renown, so that even the Puritan followers of Lord Walton had words of praise and admiration for this noble young Cavalier, who was to be wedded to their leader's daughter that day.

A glad meeting took place between Elvira and her lover; and then, whilst the happy maiden retired to don her bridal robes, Arthur remained in the court-yard of the castle, where his tender thoughts were

unexpectedly diverted into another channel.

As he waited there, a captive lady, closely guarded, was brought out from the fortress into the court-yard, where she was informed by Lord Walton that she was about to be escorted to the Parliamentary

tribunal, there to receive her sentence.

The despairing looks of the captive lady moved Arthur to deep pity; and on learning from Lord George that she had been imprisoned several months in the fortress as one strongly suspected of favouring the Stuart cause and of having acted as their spy, and that she would certainly be condemned to the scaffold, the young Cavalier, as a fellow-adherent of the Royalists, determined to seek speech with her.

Therefore, whilst the attention of the officers and guards was turned in another direction for a short time, he managed to get sufficiently near the lady to enter into a low-toned conversation with her; and then, to his utter horror and dismay, he discovered that the captive was none other than the widow of the unfortunate Charles the First, Queen Henrietta, who, whilst engaged in disguise on a secret enterprise on behalf of her fugitive son, had been captured by her enemies and thrust by them into Plymouth fortress, where, though still preserving her incognito, she knew herself to be in the utmost danger.

Arthur, ever faithful to the Stuart cause, now felt it to be his sacred duty to rescue the unfortunate Oueen from her desperate situation; and he told the unhappy Henrietta that he would do all in his power to save her.

At this moment, the bride and her maidens returned to the courtyard; and Elvira, whose tender heart could not bear that another should be in trouble when she herself was so full of joy, at once approached the captive lady, for whose sad fate she had many times grieved, and tried to cheer her with words of comfort. She even playfully removed her long bridal veil, and drooped it over Henrietta's dark locks, clapping her hands merrily at the effect, and declaring she would make a beautiful bride; and the Queen, forgetting her sadness for the moment, was so charmed with the youthful grace and sweet innocence of Elvira, that she indulgently suffered her artless playfulness.

The time for the ceremony was now almost due; and Elvira was hurried away by her uncle to the chapel so quickly that she had not time to don her veil again, but gaily called to Henrietta to follow her with it, forgetting in her eager excitement that the

poor lady was a captive.

As the bridal party trooped into the chapel, Arthur slipped back to the courtyard, blessing the happy chance which had left Henrietta in possession of the bridal veil; and bidding the Queen to wrap it closely about her face and form, he hurried her to the gates of the courtyard, hoping that she might now be mistaken for Elvira, and be thus permitted to pass through.

In spite of his anguirh at being compelled to leave his beloved Elvir. the very moment of their union, Arthur was too loyal a Royalist to forsake his Queen in her extremity; and crushing down the strong temptation to return to his waiting bride, he steadfastly conducted his royal charge to the fortress

gates.

Here, to his dismay, he found Sir Richard Forth on guard; and the Puritan officer, severely smarting from the sudden cancellation of his betrothal with Elvira, and believing the veiled lady to be the bride, refused to let them pass, and challenged his successful rival to mortal combat. When, however, Henrietta lifted her veil, and in terrified accents bade the pair sheathe their swords, the Puritan saw that he had made a mistake; and he at once gave his permission for them to pass through the gates, hoping that by reporting the secret departure of Arthur with the captive lady, he would prove to Elvira the faithlessness of her Cavalier lover, and thus further his own suit once more.

Arthur and the Queen thus escaped safely from the fortress; and as soon as the news became known, the greatest consternation prevailed. A number of Parliamentary soldiers were quickly sent out to search for the fugitives, but Lord Arthur cleverly succeeded in eluding them, until he had placed the Queen on board a ship, in which she was safely

conveyed to France.

Meanwhile, Elvira had received a terrible shock on learning of the desertion of her lover at the very moment of their marriage; and being led by the story of Sir Richard Forth to believe him faithless, her grief was so frantic that she completely lost her reason. The poor girl would wander out alone into the woods every day, now prattling childishly of happy days gone by, and anon imagining herself in the company of her beloved Arthur; and all the inmates of the fortress were filled with sorrow at the terrible change which had taken place in her.

Lord Arthur Talbot was now proscribed and condemned to death by the Parliamentary Government for having effected the escape of a political prisoner; but Sir Richard Forth, who had special influence with his party, was at length persuaded by Elvira's uncle to plead for the young Cavalier's life to be spared, should he be captured, for the kindly old Puritan hoped that if his distraught niece could be brought face to face with her lover once more, her

reason might be restored.

At last, Arthur, having succeeded in eluding his enemics for several months, managed to return to Plymouth, intending to enter the fortress once more. in spite of danger, and to claim his bride; and as he hurried cautiously through the neighbouring wood, he happened to meet Elvira herself, who was. aimlessly wandering there as usual, singing wild and plaintive ditties with the unmistakable air of one bereft of reason.

Terribly grieved and shocked at beholding his beloved one in such a condition, Arthur approached, and gently folded her in his arms, uttering tender words of greeting. As Lord George had foretold, the reappearance of Arthur did indeed restore Elvira's mental balance; and with great delight, she returned his embraces, and listened gladly to the story of his adventures, and his explanation as to the true identity of the captive lady whom he had thought it his duty to save from the scaffold.

Even as the restored lovers thus talked happily together, the Purtan search-party arrived on the scene, having learnt of Arthur's return to the neighbourhood, and now tracked him to the wood; and dragging the young Cavalier from the arms of Elvira, they bade him prepare for instant death.

At this distressing moment, however, another party, headed by Lord George Walton and Sir Richard Forth, came galloping up, and ordered the immediate release of the prisoner; and as the search-party drew back in surprise, they were triumphantly informed that news had just arrived that the Parliamentary forces had finally conquered the Royalists, and that in celebration of the event, all political prisoners were pardoned.

All was now peace and rejoicing; and Elvira, the Puritan maiden, completely restored to reason once more by the return of her lover, was united to the

young Cavalier without farther delay.

THE LILY OF KILLARNEY

ONE summer evening, a gay company of merry-makers were gathered together in the brilliantly lighted hall at Torc Cregan, an ancient Irish mansion beautifully situated in the romantic district of Killarney; for Hardress Cregan, the handsome young owner of the estates, was entertaining his friends with all the generous prodigality and light-hearted carelessness of his race.

The old hall rang with laughter and the sound of boisterous songs; and the merry guests now rejoiced with their host for his bachelor state and freedom from care, and anon rated him for not taking on

himself the sweet bonds of matrimony.

All were bent on enjoyment and ready for any mad frolic; and when a moonlight steeplechase was suggested in order to try the disputed merits of two of the guests' steeds, it was hailed with zest, and the whole party trooped out into the open air to

watch the sport.

But Mrs. Cregan, the widowed mother of Hardress, remained behind in the deserted hall; and upon a servant, a few moments later, announcing a newcomer, "Mr. Corrigan," her gaiety quickly vanished, and a careworn, hunted look came into her eyes. For Corrigan was an agent, or "middleman," a low-bred, officious fellow who held a mortgage on the Cregan estates; and being ambitious and eager to make a position for himself in Kerry, he did not hesitate to dictate insolent terms to the aristocratic family he thus had in his power. Knowing that the Cregans were considerably em-

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barrassed for money, and feeling that his chance for early payment was small, he had requested Mrs. Cregan to persuade her son to seek marriage with Miss Anne Chute, the richest heiress in Kerry, with whose wealth the matter of the mortgage could be comfortably settled; and it was his practice to intrude occasionally to learn how Hardress's suit was

progressing.

To-night, however, he had a new suggestion to make; for being impressed by the still youthful looks and charms of Mrs. Cregan, he had the assurance to remark that, should Hardress not succeed in securing the heiress, he would himself be willing to accept the hand of the handsome widow in lieu of payment. To this suggestion Mrs. Cregan, who loathed and despised the man, gave a proud refusal; but her indignant demeanour was quickly changed to dismay when Corrigan, angered by her scorn, declared that if she intended Hardress to settle the debt by marrying the heiress, she must keep a strict watch upon him, since he was indulging in a secret amour with an unknown peasant girl, whom he kept hidden in a cottage on the opposite shore of the neighbouring lake.

Mrs. Cregan incredulously repudiated his statement; but her angry speech was interrupted by the sound of a song sung by a lake boatman, whom Corrigan triumphantly declared to be Danny Mann, the devoted, though humble, follower of Hardress, for whom he was evidently now waiting, in order to convey him to his mysterious sweetheart on the

opposite shore.

To convince Mrs. Cregan of the truth of his statement, Corrigan drew her behind a curtain, from whence, unseen, she could watch the result of the boatman's signal. A few moments later, Hardress, having made his escape from his friends on hearing the boatman's song, entered the room, and spoke with Danny Mann through the open window; and then, taking up a lighted candle, he exposed it and

shaded it three times, finally extinguishing it altogether, upon which a similar light in a cottage window on the opposite shore of the lake likewise flashed and vanished.

After this unmistakable signal had been made, Hardress hurried down to the water, and was rowed across the lake in Danny Mann's boat; and Mrs. Cregan, now only too well convinced of her son's intrigue, was filled with dismay. But Corrigan left the house in triumph, knowing that the startled widow would now hurry forward her son's suit with the heiress, since her pride of birth would not suffer her to contemplate the young man's present love affair with serenity; and he chuckled as he thought how remorselessly he would insist upon the second mode of paying the debt, should the first one fail.

Meanwhile, in the cottage on the other side of the lake, Eily O'Connor, the Lily of Killarney, a lovely young Irish girl, whose silky raven locks had won for her the name of the Colleen Bawn, eagerly awaited the arrival of Hardress Cregan, who was indeed not only her lover, but her lawful husband also; for Hardress had fallen so passionately in love with this beautiful peasant maiden that, fearful lest he might lose her through the opposition of his own people, he had persuaded her to enter into a secret marriage with him. He had, however, bound her by a solemn promise not to reveal their true relation to each other, knowing that the thought of his probable union with Miss Anne Chute was the only safe means he had of keeping Corrigan from pressing for immediate settlement of his debt; and Eily, who loved her aristocratic admirer with the whole-hearted devotion of a true and trusting nature, readily consented, and at his bidding kept herself hidden in the little cottage on the shore of the lake. Here she was watched over and guarded by a good priest, known as Father Tom; and here also she was frequently visited by a peasant lover, a smuggler outlaw named Myles-na-Coppaleen, who, though knowing her to be the wife of Hardress Cregan, still showed his devotion to her by keeping close at hand, in order to serve her should the occasion arise.

To-night, as he was conveying a keg of smuggled whisky to his friend, Father Tom, to whom, as a good Catholic, he always gave a tenth of his possessions, Myles had met with the agent, Corrigan, who, knowing him to be in the confidence of Hardress Cregan, had endeavoured to draw information from him as to the identity of the mysterious hidden maiden in the lake-shore cottage; but his fair words and promised bribes made little headway with the staunch Myles, whose lively Irish wit made him more

than a match for the prying agent.

When Corrigan had departed, Myles made his way to the Colleen Bawn's cottage, where he found the inmates somewhat upset; for Father Tom, jealous of the good name of the pretty maiden over whom he exercised guardianship, had been pressing Eily to persuade Hardress Cregan to acknowledge their marriage, declaring it to be unjust to her that he should continue to visit her by stealth. Nor was the good father satisfied when Eily declared that Hardress doubtless felt ashamed to introduce a peasant wife to his fine relations, and that he might even leave her altogether should he be pressed to do so; but when he again sternly insisted upon her securing her rights, she agreed to do so.

On the entrance of Myles, however, gaiety once more reigned in the cottage; for the merry outlaw insisted on brewing a big bowl of punch, to the

accompaniment of a lively Irish song.

As the song came to an end, Hardress Cregan appeared; and Eily soon noticed that he was anxious and upset, since her strong Irish broque irritated him more than usual, so that he scolded her for mispronouncing her words. Presently she learnt from him of the difficulty he was in with regard to the mortgage on his estate; and he eagerly desired her to give up her marriage certificate, that he might

be free to make the union his mother desired, declaring that otherwise he would visit her no more.

Eily's love for Hardress was so great that she was even willing to make the monstrous sacrifice he required, in order to save him from ruin; but Mylesna-Coppaleen indignantly interposed to prevent such a selfish design from being carried out, whilst Father Tom sternly compelled Hardress to give into his own keeping the certificate which the trusting Eily had

vielded up.

Young Cregan, angry at being thus foiled, and equally ashamed at the base part he had felt compelled to play for the sake of his mother's welfare, left the cottage in a passion, declaring that he would never visit it again, and bidding the Colleen Bawn farewell for ever; and poor Eily, overcome by this distressing scene, fell senseless to the floor, heedless of the words of comfort uttered by her two faithful friends.

Hardress, though soon filled with deep remorse for his recent heartless conduct, now began to pay his addresses to Anne Chute with such earnestness and success that their engagement and early marriage was presently announced; but the young man's thoughts constantly reverted to the deserted Eily, whom he still loved dearly, and whose gentle image

he could not drive from his mind.

Soon, his troubled thoughts and embarrassing situation became known to Danny Mann; and the wily boatman, whose devotion and love for young Cregan was intense, suggested a desperate means for securing his freedom. He hinted that he would himself willingly resort to violence in order to remove the Colleen Bawn from his master's path; and even when Hardress refused with horror and indignation to consider such a scheme, he still declared that he was ready to do the deed at any time, if Cregan would send him his glove as a token that he desired Lily O'Connor to vanish.

Shortly after this, Mrs. Cregan received another visit from Corrigan, the agent, who, still doubting whether Hardress would ever marry the heiress, began to press his hateful alternative upon her; but his undesired attempts at love-making were summarily stopped by the entrance of young Cregan, who, grasping the situation at a glance, forcibly ejected the agent, pouring fiery words of indignation upon him, to which Corrigan replied with sulky

threats of an early triumph.

It happened that Danny Mann, the boatman, who was waiting without, overheard the whole of this conversation; and after cautiously watching Corrigan and Hardress to a safe distance, he came forward to speak with Mrs. Cregan, declaring that the only way to make a break between her son and his sweetheart, the Colleen Bawn, was to pack the girl off to America, slyly undertaking to arrange the matter himself with Eily, who he knew would consent, if he could show to her Hardress's glove as a token that it was his desire that she should go.

Mrs. Cregan, unaware that the pair were married, and equally unsuspicious that Danny had any darker scheme in his mind, went at once in search of the required symbol, feeling that if only Eily could be got away from the district, Hardress would think no more about her, and thus his marriage with Anne Chute could be hurried forward; and soon she returned with one of Hardress's gloves, which was joyfully seized by the boatman, who eagerly set about carrying out his base design, by which he intended to force the Colleen Bawn, by threats of murder, to give up her marriage certificate, knowing that if once this could be destroyed, she had no legal claim Hardress Cregan, since the priest who had wedded them, and all other witnesses of the marriage, were dead.

With stealthy haste, Danny Mann got out his boat; and, making his way to the cottage of the Colleen Bawn, he informed her that Hardress had sent him to fetch her away at once. The unsuspicious Eily was filled with joy on hearing this, for she had seen and heard nothing of Hardress since the night he had left her in anger; and she eagerly stepped into Danny Mann's boat, believing that her beloved one had forgiven her, and was about to acknowledge her as his wife. The fact that Danny appeared to have been drinking somewhat heavily did not cause her any alarm for her safety; for it never entered into her trusting heart that the old boatman, who had always loved her, could ever do her harm, much less that he had deliberately bolstered his courage with drink for this very purpose.

Too soon, however, her fears were awakened; for Danny Mann, instead of taking her to the opposite shore as she had expected, hastily rowed her to a dark and lonely water cave, where he roughly bade her step out on a rock. Then he commanded her to either deliver up to him the marriage certificate which he knew she now always carried in her bosom, or be thrown by him into the lake to drown; and poor Eily, at last full of fear, implored him to have pity upon her, since she had sworn to the priest, Father Tom, that she would never part with her

marriage lines.

But Danny Mann was too devoted to Hardress Cregan to be kept from his resolve by even the tearful entreaties of the fair Lily of Killarney; and still believing that he was acting in the real interests of his beloved young master, he fiercely demanded the marriage certificate, and upon Eily again firmly refusing to part with it, he pushed her remorselessly into the water.

At this moment a shot was fired, and Danny Mann, mortally wounded by his unseen assailant, fell also

into the water.

The person who had fired this shot was none other than Myles-na-Coppaleen, the Colleen Bawn's peasant lover, who used this solitary water cave as a hidingplace for the kegs of whisky and other contraband goods which he smuggled from time to time; and swinging himself by means of a long rope into his secret domain at the moment of Eily's fall into the water, and seeing a moving form on the rock, he mistook it in the darkness for an otter, took aim, and fired.

He was just chuckling over the excellent shot he had made, when he noticed something white floating in the water; and soon, to his horror, recognising this as the form of his beloved Eily, he instantly dived in to her rescue. After some little difficulty he reappeared with the now unconscious girl in his arms; and placing her tenderly in his boat, he hastily rowed her away from the cave, and conveyed her to his own cabin.

Here, with great tenderness, he restored her to consciousness once more; but on learning from her that it was Danny Mann who had thrust her into the water, and whom he had himself shot in the cave in mistake for an otter, he suspected foul play, and determined to keep the girl hidden for the present,

believing the old boatman to be dead.

But Danny Mann, although mortally wounded, did not die immediately; and after a long and painful effort, he managed to crawl from the cave and reach a place of safety, where aid was forthcoming. He begged his rescuers to send for Father Tom, that he might corfess to him before he died; and on the arrival of the priest he told him of the whole plot, and that he had drowned Eily O'Connor in the hope of being of service to Hardress Cregan.

The unaccountable disappearance of the Colleen Bawn confirmed his story, which quickly spread; and this information coming to the ears of Corrigan, the agent, he at once went before the magistrates, and accused Hardress Cregan of complicity in the crime. An order was accordingly made out for the arrest of Hardress; and Corrigan set off with the officers of justice and soldiers for this purpose, maliciously triumphing in the revenge he

could now take upon the Cregans for their contempt of him.

He led his men to the mansion of Anne Chute, where a gay company of guests had already assembled for the wedding festivities, which were even now being held; but even as the soldiers surrounded the house, Hardress Cregan, unable to keep up the deception any longer, drew the heiress away from her guests, and confessed all to her, telling her of his secret marriage with the Colleen Bawn, for whom he now deeply mourned, believing her to be dead.

Anne Chute possessed a gentle and kindly nature; and instead of spurning him, as he had expected, she had only sympathy for his sorrow, and willingly expressed her forgiveness for his conduct to herself.

It was at this moment that Corrigan entered with the officers of justice to arrest the now despairing young man for Lis supposed complicity in the murder of Eily O'Connor; and a scene of the wildest consternation followed. Anne Chute and all her guests declared stoutly that Hardress could not be guilty of such a horrible crime; but Corrigan triumphantly produced the glove which Danny Mann had obtained, declaring this to be the token agreed upon between the old boatman and his master that the unfortunate girl should disappear.

Hardress indignantly denied that he had ever sent such a token, declaring that though Danny Mann had indeed made the dark suggestion to him, he had instantly repelled it with horror; and Mrs. Cregan, who had been half-dazed by the shock of her son's danger, now rushed forward, and related how the old boatman had enticed her to give him the glove, thus proving beyond doubt that Hardress

was entirely innocent in the matter.

Then, to the utter surprise and relief of all, there came a sudden and welcome interruption to this distressing scene; for Eily O'Connor herself entered the room, accompanied by Myles-na-Coppaleen, who, hearing of the dangerous position of Hardress

Cregan, had judged this to be the right moment in which to produce the girl whose life he had saved.

With deep joy and thankfulness, Hardress clasped his beloved Eily in his arms, and introduced her to the astonished company as his lawful wife; and seeing the turn affairs had taken, Corrigan, the agent, slunk quietly out of the room.

Nor had he again the power to annoy or persecute the Cregans; for, with splendid generosity, Anne Chute insisted upon settling the matter of the mortgage as her wedding gift to Hardress and his lovely

Colleen Bawn.

CARMEN

ONE noontide, during the early years of the nineteenth century, a group of light-hearted soldiers were standing together outside the guard-house in the great public square of Seville waiting for the change of guard; and as they stood there, idly watching the ever-moving crowd, they whiled away the time by making merry remarks on the passers-by.

It was a bright and lively scene, for at this time of the day the square was filled with youths and maidens just freed from morning work, who, seeking relaxation, were glad enough to sing and dance, and indulged in gay badinage one with another.

One of the soldiers without the guard-house, a brigadier named Morales, found endless amusement in watching the living panorama before him; and presently he noticed a pretty young girl, who, by her timid glances and innocent, hesitating manner, he guessed at once to be a stranger from the country.

The newcomer was indeed a humble peasant maid, by name, Micaela, who had journeyed from her village home some miles distant in search of her foster-brother, Don Jose, a young brigadier in the regiment now quartered at Seville, to whom she bore a message from his mother; but having made her way into the busy square, she was so much bewildered by the noisy crowd that she hardly dared to venture further.

Seeing her hesitancy, the dashing Morales swaggered forward, and asked her in easy tones whom she sought; and on learning from the trembling maiden that she wished to speak with Don Jose, he told her that the young brigadier would presently appear with the change of guard, and suggested that in the meantime she should accept the company of himself and his friends. But the bold, admiring glances of the gay soldiers alarmed the shy Micaela, and with a startled cry she broke from the persuading arms of Morales, and ran off to await her foster-brother's appearance in a quieter spot.

A few minutes later the guard was changed, and with the relieving party came the brigadier, Don Jose, a handsome youth who had some months ago left his quiet country home for the excitement and stir of a soldier's life. On being told by Morales that a pretty peasant maiden had been asking for him, Don Jose guessed at once that it was Micaela, and rejoiced; for having grown up together, he regarded her with much affection, and even intended to marry her, knowing this to be his mother's cherished desire.

Just as the guard was changed, the bell of a large cigarette factory at one end of the square clanged forth its noonday chimes, and a few minutes later a noisy troop of girls employed as cigarette-makers came pouring forth from the building, laughing and chattering gaily as they mingled with the idlers in the square.

Amongst this merry throng of newcomers was a beautiful young girl of gipsy birth, named Carmen, whose dark, flashing eyes and scornful lips spoke of passionate emotions and reckless daring, and whose saucy, sparkling glances proclaimed the born coquette; and no sooner did she appear than a court of admiring youths instantly crowded around her, clamouring for her smiles and favours.

But the capricious beauty would have none of them this day, for her roving eye had fallen upon the handsome form of the young brigadier, Don Jose, and being greatly struck with his manly appearance, she presently went boldly forward and made acquaintance with him, declaring plainly that she liked his looks, and inviting him to meet her

when next he came off duty.

Now Don Jose had been warned of the dangerous attractions of the lovely cigarette-girl, and so received her advances somewhat coldly; but when the saucy Carmen flung him the rose she had been wearing as she laughingly tripped away, he picked it up eagerly, enthralled by her dazzling glances

in spite of himself.

At this moment Micaela appeared in the square once more, and Don Jose, hurrying forward, greeted her with much affection and eagerness, longing for news of his country home. The gentle peasant maiden placed in his hands a letter from his mother, and also a gift of money; and, faithful to her charge, she delivered the lonely widow's loving message, even bestowing upon him the kiss she had sent at

parting.

Having thus fulfilled her quest, Micaela, still afraid of the staring crowd, departed, saying she would return again shortly; and Done Jose, his heart filled with tender memories of home, began to read his mother's letter. The widow besought her son not to forget his old home, but to return shortly and wed the gentle Micaela, who loved him so well and faithfully; and the young brigadier was so engrossed by the sweet visions of peaceful joy thus suggested to him, that he stood for a time lost in pleasant thought, and utterly regardless of the merry throng around him.

Presently, however, he was aroused from his reverie by loud cries and angry expostulations from amongst the cigarette-girls, and seeing that a squabble was taking place, he hurried forward with the Captain of the Guard to restore order. The reckless Carmen, ever ripe for mischief, had picked a quarrel with one of the other cigarette-makers, and her hot blood being roused by the taunts of her

companion, she had quickly drawn a stiletto, and aimed a blow at her.

Seeing that the girl was wounded, the Captain of the Guard instantly ordered the fiery Carmen to be arrested, though one of her admirers himself; and then, leaving Don Jose in charge of the captive, he hurried into the guard-house to obtain the order for

her imprisonment.

Now Carnien had no intention of going to prison; and knowing well enough that she had already attracted the handsome young brigadier, for whom a sudden passion had also grown up within her own fickle heart, she quickly determined to fascinate him still further, so that he should connive at her escape. So that when Don Jose tried to secure her hands with a cord, she laughingly besought him to bind her with his own arms instead, declaring saucily that she knew he loved her because he still wore the rose she had thrown to him, and since he loved her he was now in her power, and must do exactly as she commanded.

Don Jose, though greatly enthralled and a victim to her passionate glances, made a feeble denial of his love, but Carmen laughed derisively, declaring again that he was hers, and inviting him to meet her later at a certain inn on the borders of Seville, where they would dance and sing together as happy lovers.

The young brigadier was now completely bewitched by the enticing words of the beautiful coquette, who thus tempted him to forget his duty; and full of the intoxication of sudden love, he whispered passionately that he would help her to escape, and meet her at the border inn, if she would promise to love him in return.

Full of exultation at thus gaining her freedom and a new lover into the bargain, Carmen gave the promise, and then the two quickly arranged a plan of escape.

When the Captain of the Guard returned with the

prison order, the young brigadier led the captive off at once; but ere they had gone far, Carmen gave Don Jose a sudden push, so that he fell to the ground, and in the confusion that followed, she managed to make her escape through the crowd.

It was easily seen by the captain and soldiers standing about that Don Jose had allowed himself to be thrown to the ground, and he was quickly captured and borne off to gaol. Here he was compelled to serve a term of imprisonment; but all through his lonely hours he thought constantly of the fascinating young beauty whom he now loved so passionately, and determined to keep his appointment with her directly he gained his freedom.

Meanwhile Carmen had made her way to the border inn, the landlord of which was one of a successful band of smugglers; and here, falling into gipsy ways once more, she gave her assistance to the illicit traffic, the dangers and risks of which strongly appealed to her daring spirit and love of adventure.

This border inn was the favourite resort of certain officers and soldiers in the town, who, knowing nothing of the smuggling tendencies of the landlord. went to dance and amuse themselves with the pretty gipsy girls who frequented the place. Amongst these officers was Zuniga, the Captain of the Guard, who was so fascinated by the tantalizing charms of Carmen that he made no attempt at her recapture. preferring to make love to her instead; but the careless coquette would have nothing to say to him, until he came one evening with the news that Don Jose had been set at liberty and allowed to return to his regimental duties. Then she condescended to smile on the captain, for she was delighted to hear of her self-sacrificing lover's freedom, knowing well that he would certainly seek her out at once; and the foolish Zuniga went away happy, imagining that he had made a conquest.

That same evening a grand torchlight procession in honour of the most popular Toreador in Seville,

a gay, handsome youth named Escamillo, took place; and on passing the border inn, the Toreador and his friends stepped within. Being greatly struck with the enticing beauty of Carmen, the gay Escamillo made advances to her, seeking her good favour; but the pretty gipsy, though pleased with his handsome looks, would neither accept nor refuse his admiration, all her thoughts for the present being centred on Don Jose, who she knew would visit her

that night.

When the Toreador, soldiers, and other customers had departed, the landlord brought in his smuggler friends to talk over a new enterprise, with which they desired the gipsy girls to help. To their astonishment, Carmen flatly refused to join them that night, declaring that she meant to wait within the inn for her lover; and in spite of her companions' expostulations and entreaties, she still clung to this resolution. Then the smugglers, knowing that threats were in vain with the fearless gipsy, suggested that she should persuade her lover also to join their expedition; and Carmen gladly agreed to this, bidding them wait for her in an adjoining room.

No sooner had the smugglers retired than she heard Don Jose's voice outside; and opening the door quietly, she was next moment clasped in her lover's arms. Then, whilst the young brigadier refreshed himself with the food and wine she placed before him, Carmen sang and danced in her most enchanting manner, and Don Jose, more in love than ever, applauded her with great delight.

But suddenly he heard the bugle call outside, sounding the recall; and knowing that this was the signal for all soldiers to return to the barracks, he rose to bid his sweetheart farewell for the night. Then Carmen was offended, saying he could not care for her or he would not be so anxious to leave her side; and in spite of Don Jose's explanation that his soldier's duty alone compelled him to go, she scorn-

fully refused to listen to him, declaring that if he truly loved her he would be willing to remain, and

to follow her wherever she might lead.

Employing her most practised arts of coquetry, she tempted him to give up all and fly with her and her smuggler friends to the mountains, to live the rover's life of excitement and danger, declaring that, otherwise, she would never see him again; and the poor young brigadier was nearly distracted, for, though enthralled by love, yet he could not bear to think of deserting his regiment.

Just then there came a knock at the door, and Zuniga, Captain of the Guard, entered, having come for another farewell greeting from Carmen before returning to the town; but on encountering Don Jose, he haughtily ordered the youth to instantly rejoin the departing soldiers, who were again sounding the bugle call. But Don Jose, angry at the interruption, passionately refused to go, and next moment their swords were clashing together.

Carmon triumphant at the victory she had gained, knowing that Don Jose at last was hers, called aloud for help, and when the smugglers rushed into the room, she made them seize and bind the unfortunate captain so that he should not interfere with their plans. Don Jose, now completely under the spell of Carmen's fascination, was next invited by the smugglers to join their enterprise, and upon his agreeing to do so, the whole party set off to their

rocky retreat in the mountains.

Here, amidst a wild, picturesque country, the smugglers plied their illicit trade with success for some time; and Don Jose, though often filled with remorse for his lost position, and tortured by the thoughts of his lonely mother, who still believed in his honesty, found relief in the frequent danger he was exposed to, and delight in the constant society of Carmen. In spite of the fact that she had caused him to desert his regiment and become a smuggler, mining his character for ever, he still passionately

loved the beautiful gipsy girl; but Carmen's fickle affection grew cooler each day, and having lost the excitement of pursuit by conquest, she already wished for a new lover, and began to think tenderly of the handsome Toreador who had besought her favour at the inn. But as Carmen's love grew colder, the more passionately did Don Jose long to keep it, and in spite of her taunts and slights, he declared that she should not cast him off, since he would never leave her side. However, he was at last compelled to do so; and the faithless gipsy rejoiced at the chance circumstance that took away from her the lover she had grown weary of.

One day Don Jose was set to guard the entrance to the smugglers' haunt, and seeing a stranger climbing up the mountain-side, he raised his gun and fired. The stranger, however, leaped aside and avoided the shot, and next moment he sprang to the ledge beside his assailant, and announced himself

as Escamillo, the Toreador.

This well-known name dispersed Don Jose's hostility at once, and greeting the newcomer with respect, he desired to know his business in the gipsy camp. Escamillo replied that he had come to see the beautiful young gipsy girl, Carmen, with whom he had fallen desperately in love, and whose favour he now hoped to gain, since he expected she had by this time discarded her last lover, a deserter from the army.

On hearing this, Don Jose was filled with anger and jealousy, and drawing his dagger, challenged the Toreador to fight; and Escamillo, seeing that he had unwittingly fallen upon a rival, drew his own dagger in defence. But before either could aim a stroke, Carmen, who had heard the shot fired, appeared on the scene with the smugglers, who

quickly separated the pair.

Escamillo rushed instantly to the side of Carmen, greeting her with rapture, and rejoicing to find that his advances were now received with answering

pleasure; and then, as the smugglers refused to allow him to remain in their midst, he bade them farewell, but invited them all ere he departed to attend the great bull-fight to be held that week in Seville, at which he expected to achieve another

triumph.

When he had gone, Don Jose, who had seen the passionate glances Carmen had bestowed upon her new admirer, began to upbraid her, and to warn her not to torture him too much, lest he did her harm. But the reckless Carmen cared naught for his threats, even though that very day, when reading her fortune by cards, they had foretold her an early death; for the beautiful gipsy was a true fatalist, and, regardless of the future, was willing to accept evil, if evil was in store for her.

Before Don Jose could expostulate further with Carmen, some of the smugglers came up to him with a struggling girl whom they had just found making her way into their camp; and to his utter astonishment and dismay the young brigadier beheld his

foster-sister, Micaela.

The poor peasant girl had journeyed to Seville a second time, bearing another sad message to the man she loved; and on being told of Don Jose's desertion and of the evil ways into which he had fallen, she had still determined to find him, that she might deliver her message, and, if possible, draw him away from the woman who had enticed him to

such wrong-doing.

Having learnt that he was in the gipsy smugglers' camp, she had fearlessly made her way there; and now, on coming face to face with the object of her search, she implored him to return with her to his old home, where his lonely mother was still weeping and waiting for him. Carmen, hoping thus to be rid of her inconvenient lover, also added to this entreaty, saying that he would do well to go away, since a smuggler's life would never suit him; but Don Jose, stung by her scornful taunt, declared that

he would never leave her side, since she only desired his absence that she might pursue her new Toreador lover.

Then Micaela, with tears in her eyes, told the wretched youth that his mother was dying, and that unless he returned with her at once he would be too late to receive her forgiveness and last blessing; and, on hearing this, Don Jose was distracted with grief, and his filial love overcoming all other feelings for the moment, he bade a hasty farewell to Carmen, declaring that he would be with her again in a few days.

He then went off with Micaela; and the fickle Carmen, now thinking only of Escamillo, whom she already loved, returned next day to Seville with her gipsy friends, who had by this time finished their enterprise and were eager to attend the bull-fight to which they had been invited. The gay Toreador soon found himself an accepted lover; and Carmen, now loving at last with the whole of her passionate nature, was radiantly happy with Escamillo.

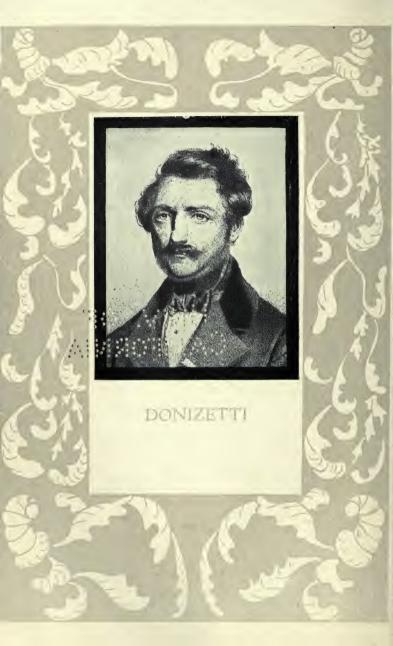
On the day of the bull-fight she accompanied him to the arena; and when he had departed for the fight, she was just about to enter the enclosure in order to watch his triumph, when she saw Don Jose approaching. Her gipsy companions begged her to turn aside, fearing from his dark, gloomy looks that he meant to do her harm; but Carmen was brave, and, reckless of danger, she went forward to meet her discarded lover with a cool and dauntless air.

Don Jose, chastened by grief and suffering, gently took the beautiful girl's hand in his and besought her to return with him to his country home, that they might there live a new and better life together; adding that he loved her so dearly that he longed to save her from her evil ways.

But Carmen angrily freed herself from his grasp, saying that all was now at an end between them, since she could never love him again; and flinging at his feet the ring he had given her, she declared passionately that she loved Escamillo the Toreador with her whole heart, and would love him only until her last breath. Stung to madness by her repudiation of him, Don Jose's pent-up rage and jealousy now broke forth in all its fury; and, in a sudden frenzy of passion, he drew his stiletto and stabbed her to the heart.

As the beautiful Carmen sank lifeless to the ground, loud shouts of applause arose from the arena announcing the popular Toreador's victory, and next moment, accompanied by a cheering crowd of admirers, Escamillo came forth from the enclosure glowing with triumph, and eager for the praises and greetings of the woman he loved.

But those praises and greetings were never spoken, for the woman he loved lay dead at his feet.



LUCREZIA BORGIA

ONE summer day, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a splendid fête was being held in the gardens of the Barberigo Palace in Venice; and amongst the gay company of guests thronging the fairylike grounds were many bearers of the proudest and most

ancient names in Italy.

One of the chief guests was the brilliant young Duke Orsini, around whom there quickly gathered a group of lively friends, all of whom, with one exception, could boast of noble birth. Nor, strange to say, was this one guest of unknown ancestry despised by his companions; but, on the other hand, he was fêted and admired above all others present. For young Genarro, who knew nothing of his parentage and was not ashamed to reveal the fact that his early years had been spent under the guardianship of an old fisherman, had, on entering the Venetian army, quickly made a name for himself by his remarkable prowess in the recent warfare; and his heroic deeds, coupled with his handsome looks and charming disposition, had won for him great popularity and many friends, amongst whom even the aristocratic Orsini was proud to be numbered.

The principal subject of conversation amongst the guests was, as usual, the most recent atrocity committed by some member of the mighty Borgia family, who at that time held the chief power in Italy, and were universally feared and detested for their unscrupulous conduct and deeds of coldblooded cruelty; and as the Orsini were amongst

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their most hated enemies, the young Duke did not hesitate to represent them in the worst possible light

to his companions.

To-day, he dwelt on the many heartlessly cruel achievements of the Lady Lucrezia Borgia, who, although one of the most lovely and fascinating women of her time, had inherited her family's pride and love of power, and, like her brother Cæsar, did not scruple to use violent means to satisfy her passions or ambitions. A thrust in the dark or a poisoned draught rewarded those who presumed to interfere with the schemes of the powerful Borgias; and their victims were of all ranks, from the lowest to the highest.

The young Genarro, fresh from deeds of honour and chivalry, soon sickened at the recital of deeds of treachery; and being overcome by the excessive heat, he presently stretched himself on the ground in a shady spot near the water, and fell asleep. When he had thus left the group, Orsini, proud of his young friend, began to relate to his companions the stirring story of Genarro's heroic conduct in the recent battle of Rimini; and shortly afterwards, they wandered away to another part of the grounds.

Presently, a gondola glided silently past the festive grounds; and a lady who sat within, noticing the sleeping form of Genarro on the bank near the water's edge, and being greatly struck with his exceeding beauty, landed and stepped lightly to

his side.

This lady was none other than the notorious Lucrezia Borgia herself, who, though come on a secret mission to Venice, did not hesitate to enter boldly into the midst of her enemies, merely for the sake of gratifying an impulse of the moment.

As she silently bent over the handsome sleeping youth, a feeling of great tenderness for him suddenly welled up within Lucrezia's heart, for she now recognised him as her own son, the child born of a secret amour of her first early youth; and tremb-

ling with the excitement of her newly-awakened maternal love, and her delight in the beauty of her offspring, she raised his hand and kissed it softly.

At her salute, the young man awakened, greatly confused at finding himself thus alone with such a dazzling stranger; for Lucrezia was still young and beautiful, and her wonderful fascination was quickly felt by Genarro, who made friends with her at once, and was soon engaged in pleasant conversation with her. He told her his story with all the trusting confidence of early youth; describing to her how he had been left as an infant with the old fisherman who had brought him up, and how, after joining the Venetian army, he had seemed to lead a charmed existence, modestly refraining from dwelling upon his more recent exploits.

So delighted was the youth with the sympathy and kindness of the lady, that he begged her to reveal her name to him; but this Lucrezia refused to do, for she did not wish to destroy his evident respect for her by disclosing her identity, nor did she dare to acknowledge her true relationship to him, having

kept his birth a secret all these years.

But as she turned to leave him, Orsini and his companions returned to seek their friend; and instantly recognising the lady, whose face was well known to all of them, they denounced her to Genarro as the detested Lucrezia Borgia, whose hateful deeds they had so recently described to him.

But, though Genarro was shocked at this announcement, he had already so completely fallen under the fascination of Lucrezia that he took every opportunity of seeing her that arose; and his friendship with her was strengthened by frequent meetings.

Their evident affection for each other was ere long noticed by Lucrezia's husband, the Duke Alphonso of Ferrara, in whose breast jealousy was quickly roused to such a pitch that he vowed vengeance upon the pair, and eagerly watched for an opportunity of satisfying his wrath.

The young Duke Orsini and his companions were also greatly disturbed by their young friend's infatuation for one of the hated Borgia family; and they did all in their power, by means of scoldings and taunts, to draw him away from Lucrezia's wiles, knowing only too well that such an intimacy would certainly end disastrously for the young man.

But Genarro, who felt himself attracted by some mighty force towards the beautiful woman who showed such tender affection for him, although unable to define the feeling he had for her, continued his new intimacy in spite of the warnings of his friends; yet at times their taunts stung him bitterly, for he knew well the evil character which Lucrezia had earned for herself, and he would then despise himself for allowing her to exercise such a strange fascination over him.

On one such occasion as this, having met with his friends in the public square in front of the Borgia Palace at Ferrara, and being taunted by them more bitterly than usual, he gave vent to a passionate outburst of anger against Lucrezia; and, heedless of consequences, he dashed up to the palace door, and recklessly struck off the first letter of her name with

the short dagger he wore.

This rash deed was observed by the Duke of Ferrara himself, who at once ordered his attendants to make the young man a prisoner and hold him in the palace. He then caused the defacing of the family name to be made known to Lucrezia, who, unaware that the deed had been committed by Genarro, and only feeling rage at the insult, demanded that the culprit should be seized and put to death; and the Duke, gloating over the chance that had at last put his supposed rival in his power, declared that her wish should be immediately carried out, and ordered the prisoner to be brought into the room for sentence.

Then, when Lucrezia saw that it was her own beloved son whom she had thus so carelessly condemned to death, she was filled with dismay and horror, and at once began to plead with her husband for his life.

But the Duke remained obdurate, and furiously denounced Genarro as her lover, who should now die in her presence; and, in spite of the frantic woman's entreaties and passionate tirades, the most he would grant was that she should choose the mode of his death.

Lucrezia was for the moment filled with despair, not daring to vindicate herself by revealing her true relationship to Genarro; but, suddenly, her quick wit devising a way out of the difficulty, she declared that she was willing for the prisoner to die by drinking a draught of the famous poisoned wine of the Borgias.

The Duke, well pleased that his own strong will should have, as he supposed, conquered the proud spirit of his wife, triumphantly produced a cup of poisoned wine, which he handed to the unfortunate Genarro, compelling him to drain it to the last drop; and then, with a mocking laugh, he left the pair to take a last farewell of each other. But he had forgotten for the moment that the Borgias had the power to cure as well as to kill with the subtle poisons they used; and when he had departed, Lucrezia hastily produced an antidote to the fatal draught which Genarro had just taken, so that the young man, by swallowing this, was thus saved from an untimely end.

Having seen that the antidote was taking good effect, Lucrezia hurried the still half-dazed Genarro out of the palace through an unfrequented passage; and bidding him betake himself to Venice, she hoped

he was safe from further harm.

Being no longer occupied with the engrossing pleasure of her newly-found son's society, and freed from the softening influence which he had exercised over her, Lucrezia became once more involved in her political schemes and personal intrigues; and having vowed vengeance upon the young Duke Orsini and his four companions for their denunciation of her to

Genarro, she proceeded to take her revenge upon them at a splendid banquet to be held at the palace of the Princess Negroni, a lady whose entertainments were always attended by the victims she had marked out.

When the night of the banquet arrived, the cunning Borgia managed to poison a flagon of rich wine, which she caused to be served out to the five nobles whose deaths she desired; and then she concealed her-

self, to await the consummation of her plan.

As the revels waxed more boisterous, Orsini, exhilarated by the rare wine he had been served with. entertained the company by singing a gay drinking song; and amidst the applause which followed his performance, Lucrezia made her appearance, and revealing herself to Orsini and his companions, announced with cruel triumph that they had all partaken of poisoned wine and that in a few minutes they would be dead. At her command, the attendants showed the five victims the coffins in which they would shortly lie; but at this moment, when her vengeance was just consummated, she was suddenly prostrated with horror. For Genarro, who, neglectful of her bidding, had remained in Ferrara, now suddenly appeared before her; and, announcing that he also, as a guest at the banquet, had partaken of the poisoned wine, sternly desired her to provide a sixth coffin for his remains when he should presently breathe his last.

The revellers, overcome by this tragic interruption to their mirth, left the banqueting hall one by one, with pale faces and trembling steps; and the mother

and son were left alone.

Lucrezia was filled with the utmost horror on thus discovering that she had once again caused her beloved son to be poisoned; and quickly producing the antidote, with tears and entreaties she begged him to swallow it instantly, her anxiety at his extreme danger being so great that, unable to control her feelings, she now revealed herself to him as his mother.

But Genarro refused to accept the antidote; for he was stunned by the announcement that this terrible woman, whose cold-blooded murder of his friends repelled him with horror, was his mother. It was in vain that Lucrezia, seeing that the poison was already taking deadly effect upon her gasping son, entreated him passionately to take the antidote which she offered to him, and which alone could save his life; for Genarro was determined not to live since his friends were doomed to die, and, regardless of his mother's despair, he thrust the antidote aside, and a few moments later fell back in her arms, dead.

At this moment, the Duke Alphonso entered the room; and Lucrezia, in a paroxysm of grief and wild despair, revealed to him the true relationship in which she had stood to Genarro.

The Duke had scarcely time to grasp the meaning of her distracted words, when the wretched Lucrezia herself fell gasping to the floor; for the shock of having unwittingly murdered her own son was greater than she had strength to bear, and with a last despairing cry of woe and remorse, she fell dead beside the still form of her beloved Genarro.

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOK

During the turbulent times of the seventeenth-century revolution, many of the noble families of Scotland were plunged into poverty and ruin; and under the lax and uncertain rule of changing parties, many occasions arose for unjust oppression by the ambitious holders of powerful offices, and for the pursuit

of private feuds and motives of revenge.

Thus it came about that the Barons of Ravenswood, an ancient family who had dwelt for many centuries in the south-east of Scotland amidst the wild hills of Lammermoor, became gradually poor, and lost the power they had enjoyed so long; and the young Lord Edgar, the surviving Master of Ravenswood, found himself forced to struggle against overwhelming difficulties.

The young Edgar, enthusiastic and full of spirit, did not grudge the sharing of his country's troubles; but when most of his lands and possessions fell into the hands of the Ashtons, the long hated foes of his race, and a less noble family than his own, his heart

was indeed filled with bitterness.

By ingratiating themselves with the most powerful party then in office, the Ashtons had gained considerable influence in the southern provinces; and they did not fail to use their power by taunting and annoying the family of Ravenswood, whose hatred they returned with equal zest.

But whilst Edgar of Ravenswood still managed to dwell securely in his crumbling old castle, though shorn of his wealth, his foes, in their ambitious flights and grasping pride, eventually overreached

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themselves; and at last, Sir Henry Ashton, on coming into the estates, found himself faced with ruin. He had become entangled in a Government conspiracy; and suspicion having quickly fallen upon him, he

knew himself to be in the utmost danger.

In this desperate situation, one person alone could save him from the traitor's awful doom—his fair young sister, Lucy. For Lucy Ashton's exquisite beauty and gentle nature had gained her the admiration of Sir Arthur Bucklaw, a gay young nobleman, who held high offices, and whose great influence was sufficient to remove the danger which threatened the involved Henry.

This influence Sir Arthur was willing to exert if Lucy's hand were bestowed on him in marriage; and as Henry Ashton spoke of this matter one day with his henchman, Norman, and his chaplain, Bidethe-Bent, he anxiously sought to allay his fears

thus.

Bide-the-Bent, who had been Lucy's tutor, and loved her dearly, knowing that she had no affection for Sir Arthur, begged his master not to harass the maiden, since she was still too young to think of such matters; but Norman, the henchman, laughed derisively on hearing this, and declared that, so far from being too young to think of love, Lucy already had a devoted lover, to whom she granted secret interviews in the grounds.

Henry, angry at hearing such news, demanded further information; and Norman declared that Lucy, when walking one day in the park, having been rescued from the furious attack of a wild bull by a handsome young stranger, had straightway fallen in love with him, and was now in the habit of meeting him frequently.

"And what is the name of this bold stranger who thus dares to woo my sister in secret?" cried Henry, pale with wrath; and Norman answered: "Edgar of

Ravenswood!"

On hearing that Lucy's lover was none other than

his own hated foe, Ravenswood, Henry Ashton became furious, and passionately vowed vengeance on the pair; and, full of angry, uneasy thoughts, he determined to hasten the alliance of his sister with Sir Arthur Bucklaw, after which he hoped to soon find means for vanquishing the disappointed lover.

Meanwhile, knowing her brother to be engaged with his followers, Lucy, attended by her maid, Alice, had crept down to the secret trysting-place in the park, to await the coming of her lover, whom she expected that day; for the henchman, Norman, had spoken the truth, and a deep love had indeed sprung up between Edgar of Ravenswood and the fair daughter of his enemies. As the young girl and her attendant drew near to an ancient fountain, around which a legend had grown up to the effect that a dead-and-gone Ravenswood had there slain a maiden who loved him, and that her spirit still haunted the spot, Lucy declared that she had herself recently beheld this wraith, which had made strange signs, as though warning her against some unseen danger; and Alice begged her young mistress to no longer continue her secret love passages, since such a solemn warning evidently meant that trouble was in store for her.

But Lucy heeded her not; and seeing Edgar approach, she ran to greet him with great joy. Soon, however, when the first happy moments were passed, she noticed that her lover was anxious and somewhat preoccupied; and on asking the cause, she was quickly filled with sorrow when Edgar announced that in a few hours he would be compelled to leave the country on a secret mission to France, a mission which had been entrusted to his care by the political party to which he belonged.

The young man also declared that he would now boldly seek an interview with Sir Henry Ashton, in order to secure his consent to their union; but Lucy, fearing her brother's anger, and knowing well that he would never consent to bestow her upon one for whom he bore such intense hatred, begged him to keep their love a precious secret until his return, lest evil should fall upon her during his absence.

Edgar's reply was a passionate tirade against the man who had so ruthlessly persecuted his race and brought ruin upon him; but quickly melted by the tears and entreaties of the gentle Lucy, he granted her request, and comforted her with great tenderness.

The lovers now exchanged rings, as their solemn pledge of faithfulness to each other; and with many loving embraces, they at length bade each other fare-

well, and parted with heavy hearts.

A sad and harassing time was now in store for Lucy; for Sir Henry Ashton, beset on all sides with dangers and difficulties, was determined to save himself from utter disaster by wedding his lovely sister to Sir Arthur Bucklaw, who alone had the necessary influence to extricate him from the compromising political sea of trouble in which he had become immersed.

It was in vain that Lucy refused to agree to the marriage, even summoning courage to declare her plighted troth to Edgar of Ravenswood; her brother absolutely declined to consider her wishes in the matter, and ruthlessly resolved to sacrifice her happiness to his own selfish ends. He therefore made all the arrangements for her marriage with Sir Arthur Bucklaw to be carried out; and he proceeded to invite all their relations and friends to attend the ceremony of signing the marriage contract and the wedding of the pair.

Lucy, finding herself helpless in the matter, could only hope that her beloved Edgar would return in time to claim her as his plighted bride, and thus free her from her terrible position; but to her sorrow, she received no replies to the letters she sent to her lover, and was soon plunged in despair. The fact of the matter was that Sir Henry's henchman, Norman, intercepted all the letters sent by the absent

Edgar, and took them to his master; and, between them, they also concocted a forged letter, in which the Master of Ravenswood was made to announce that his affection for Lucy had waned, and that he

had taken another lady to be his wife.

This letter Henry Ashton kept as his last argument; and on the day on which the bridal guests were expected, he had a final interview with his sister, bidding her to be of more cheerful demeanour, since she must sign her marriage contract with Sir

Arthur Bucklaw that day.

Again the unhappy girl begged for mercy, declaring that she could not marry Bucklaw since she had plighted herself to Edgar of Ravenswood, and refusing to heed her brother when he insisted that a vow made without the consent of her guardians was not binding upon her; and then, still finding her obdurate, Sir Henry produced the forged letter and bade her read it.

The hapless Lucy, believing the writing to be that of her lover, whom she was thus compelled to acknowledge as faithless, was now plunged into the deepest grief; and her brother, taking advantage of her dazed and helpless condition, besought her eagerly to turn her thoughts from such an unworthy object, and to sign the contract of the brilliant marriage which had been arranged for her, declaring that he himself would certainly forfeit his life unless she would consent to wed Sir Arthur Bucklaw, who alone had the power to save him, and was willing to do so on this one condition.

Lucy, thus basely deceived, felt that life had no further joy for her; and feeling now that it was her duty to save her brother from ruin, she fell into a state of wretched apathy, and finally consented to the marriage, caring naught for what might befall

her.

The wedding guests now arrived; and Lucy, quite dull, and heedless of Sir Arthur Bucklaw's eager greeting, at the whispered stern bidding of her brother, signed the marriage contract with a trem-

bling hand.

No sooner had she done the deed, than a cloaked stranger dashed into the room; and, to the surprise and consternation of all, the intruder proved to be none other than Edgar of Ravenswood himself, who, having just returned from France, had come to claim

his plighted bride.

For answer, Henry Ashton triumphantly showed him the signed marriage contract; and Edgar, thus seeing that Lucy had broken her troth, fell into a passion of rage and grief, and, scorning all explanations from the distracted girl, snatched her ring from his finger and returned it to her, passionately demanding his own back again.

Half-dazed with the shock of his sudden appearance, the unhappy Lucy, as in a dream, slowly and almost unwittingly drew the ring from her finger; and Edgar, after passionately trampling the love pledge beneath his foot, rushed from the room, uttering wild curses on the family of Ashton.

Hurrying to his crumbling and dismantled castle, the unhappy Master of Ravenswood remained plunged in the deepest grief; and here he was some hours later visited by the triumphant Henry Ashton, who came to announce that his sister's marriage with Sir Arthur Bucklaw had duly taken place. Passionate words passed between the two men, who had been implacable foes from childhood; and after proudly agreeing to settle their differences by a duel next morning, Henry Ashton returned to his mansion to join in the wedding festivities.

But woe was quickly to succeed to this forced merriment; for, shortly after the bride and bride-groom had been escorted to their chamber, wild shrieks were heard, and the chaplain, Bide-the-Bent, rushed into the presence of the alarmed guests with a fearful story on his lips. Lucy Ashton, tortured and racked with the anxiety and sorrow of the last few weeks, and utterly stunned and prostrated by

the final shock of Edgar's return and passionate reproaches, had lost her reason; and in a paroxysm of frenzy, she had slain her newly-made husband.

Overwhelmed with horror, Henry Ashton and his guests hurried to the scene of this awful tragedy; but though they endeavoured to calm and restore the distraught girl, their efforts were in vain, and Lucy, worn out in body as well as in mind, died a few hours later.

Bide-the-Bent and some other retainers of the family, quickly brought the sad news to Edgar of Ravenswood, who, unable to rest, was passing the night in wretchedness amidst the tombs of his ancestors in a wild and craggy spot; and when the unhappy lover thus heard of his beloved one's tragic death, and understood that he had wronged her, since she had been cruelly deceived, his woe was so great that, determined not to live without her, he stabbed himself to the heart, and fell dead at the feet of the horrified attendants.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

(La Figlia del Reggimento)

DURING the occupation of the Swiss Tyrol by the French, the soldiers of the Eleventh Regiment of the Grand Army of Napoleon had many special opportunities for distinguishing themselves; and, having one day, after a short period of rest, once again received orders to march against the enemy, the news was hailed with joy, and the camp was soon full of the bustle of departure.

But this particular day was destined to bring forth much trouble to the Eleventh Regiment, and to mark an event which caused deep disturbance in their happy camp life; and all this woe arose from their chance meeting with a party of travellers early in the

morning.

It happened that a rich lady, the Marchioness of Berkenfeld, was driving through the Tyrol on a return journey to her château; and on passing the camp of the Eleventh Regiment, she was filled with dismay when her carriage was suddenly stopped by the soldiers. Her fears, however, were soon set at rest by the Sergeant in charge, an elderly man named Sulpizio, who, on learning her name and destination, politely declared that no harm was intended her; and on being invited to rest awhile in the camp, she very gladly alighted from her carriage, and retired to the tent indicated.

As the Marchioness retired, the soldiers raised a loud shout of welcome at the appearance of a pretty young girl, dressed in the garments of a vivandière,

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whom they all greeted eagerly as their beloved Marie, the Daughter of the Regiment; and as the maiden tripped merrily amidst the men, Sulpizio sighed deeply, for the unexpected coming of the Marchioness of Berkenfeld now reminded him of a certain duty in connection with this fair child.

The story of Marie's life was a strange one. When quite an infant, she had been discovered by Sergeant Sulpizio on the battlefield; and since no one came to lay claim to her, the Regiment had unanimously decided that she should be adopted by them, and brought up in their camp. She was given the name of Marie; and as the years went on, she quickly won the hearts of all by her winning ways, so that she was tenderly cherished by her numerous adopted fathers, and entitled by them the Daughter of the Regiment.

Marie had a loving and loyal heart, and returned the affection lavished on her with interest; and as she grew up to womanhood, she determined to repay her friends' kindness by serving them in the capacity of a vivandière. Nor was there ever a merrier or more light-hearted maiden than Marie, the vivandière; and she was toasted everywhere as the truest comrade, the gentlest nurse, and the tenderest of comforters

in time of woe.

When Marie had been first discovered on the battle-field by Sulpizio, he found pinned to her clothing a letter, evidently written by her father, and addressed to the Marchioness of Berkenfeld; but not having the means of delivering this letter at that time, the Sergeant had carefully hidden it away amongst his own possessions. Now, however, as this same Marchioness had at last so strangely and unexpectedly come into his life, he felt it to be his duty to give the document into her hands.

As this thought began to trouble him, he glanced tenderly towards the pretty Marie; and noticing that she looked somewhat sad, and remembering that she had appeared less lively of late, he questioned her as to the reason. Marie, who loved Sulpizio with the most filial affection, soon made a full confession to him; and the Sergeant was astonished to learn that she had not only fallen in love, as he had rather suspected, but that the object of her affection was one whom she ought to have regarded as an enemy.

The girl related that one day quite recently she had been saved from a great danger by a young Swiss named Tonio, to whom she had very quickly lost her heart; and that her love was as ardently returned was proved by the fact that this young man had followed the Eleventh Regiment in all its movements ever since, in spite of the risk he thus ran by haunting the neighbourhood of his country's enemies.

Even as the fair vivandière spoke, there came the sound of a commotion, and a party of soldiers dragged into the camp a young man, whom they had just captured and apprehended as a spy; and, to her surprise and joy, Marie recognised in the prisoner her beloved Tonio.

To the astonishment of all she ran to embrace him; and when she had presently related the story of the service he had rendered her a short time ago, the men released him and welcomed him as a friend.

Tonio now boldly declared his love for Marie, and asked her hand in marriage; and when the elders of the Regiment saw that their beloved Daughter's happiness was bound up in this youth, they gave their consent, declaring, however, that Tonio must join their ranks and serve Napoleon in future. Tonio willingly agreed to this condition, and thus became a soldier of the Grand Army; but he was not yet destined to enjoy the happiness he thought he had secured.

As he entered into sweet converse with his beloved sweetheart, the Marchioness of Berkenfeld came out from the tent where she had been resting; and Sulpizio, unable to stifle the calls of his conscience, now entered into conversation with her on the subject of Marie, and handed to her the letter which he

had found pinned to the child's clothing.

When the Marchioness had read this letter, she became much agitated; and hurrying forward, she clasped Marie in her arms, declaring that the document proved the vivandière to be her own lost niece, and the daughter of her sister, who had contracted a secret marriage with a young French

captain.

As the soldiers listened to this declaration with dismay, the Marchioness next calmly announced that Marie must now return with her to her château, that she might be properly educated to fill the high position of her birth; and though the poor girl, horrified at the thought of leaving her beloved friends, entreated to be left with them, declaring that she had no desire to be a fine lady, her new relation was adamant in her resolve to remove her niece from such surroundings.

The elders of the Eleventh Regiment were also compelled to admit that they had no right to keep the weeping girl from her own family; and, though they were heart-broken at being thus compelled to part with their darling, they gently persuaded her

that she must leave them.

The Marchioness, afraid that further opposition might arise with delay, declared it was necessary for her to continue her journey at once, and that she must certainly take her niece with her; and at last, Marie, on the advice of her friends, agreed to go. So the weeping vivandière took a tender farewell of her lifelong friends, and kissed them all for the last time. When she came to Tonio, she embraced him passionately, declaring that in spite of her altered position, she should always remain faithful to him; and as the sorrowful young man watched his sweetheart drive away with her aristocratic relation, he vowed that he would do great deeds, and win for himself such an honourable name and position that he might be worthy to claim her yet.

On reaching the Château Berkenfeld, the Marchioness engaged masters and teachers to instruct her niece in dancing, music, foreign languages, and all the accomplishments she considered necessary for the education of a young lady of high rank; and Marie, though finding such a life very cramping and irksome after the unrestrained freedom of the camp, endeavoured to please her aunt to the best of her ability.

But the girl's heart was with her military friends; and every now and again she would break out into enthusiastic reminiscences of her childhood, and indulge in snatches of the merry regimental songs, to the horrified dismay of the decorous Marchioness, who was much shocked at such unladylike

proceedings.

At the end of a year, Marie was declared by her masters to be vastly improved in her social demeanour; and the Marchioness, eager to establish her niece more firmly in her aristocratic circle, now arranged a marriage for her with the son of a Duchess. However, Marie could not forget her soldier sweetheart, Tonio, whom she still loved as dearly as ever; but in spite of her declarations that she could never wed with another, the Marchioness still continued her negotiations with the ducal suitor, and even arranged the day on which the marriage contract was to be signed.

It was about this time that Sergeant Sulpizio was wounded in an engagement not many miles distant from the Château Berkenfeld, and was sent to the Marchioness to crave her hospitality for awhile until he should be better. The Marchioness received the Sergeant with much kindness, bestowing the utmost attention upon him; and when he had recovered somewhat from his wounds, she even permitted him free intercourse with Marie, and told him of her plans with regard to the grand marriage she had

arranged for her.

Sulpizio at first could scarcely recognise the merry

little Daughter of the Regiment in the richly-gowned and elegant young lady whom he was now bidden by his hostess to admire; but when Marie, forgetful of her recent lessons in deportment, rushed enthusiastically into his arms, and hugged him with the most unmistakable joy, he knew that her faithful heart had not changed amidst her new surroundings.

The Marchioness was eager to show off her niece's accomplishments to the Sergeant, and desired her to sing to him a sentimental French ballad she had just received from Paris; but she was greatly scandalised when Marie, half-way through the ballad, suddenly broke out into the old rollicking song she had always loved so well, and roguishly went through a number of military evolutions as accompaniment.

But though Marie was cheered for a while by the arrival of the Sergeant, she soon grew unhappy again; for she could not prevent her aunt from carrying out the scheme of the grand marriage.

At last the day arrived upon which the marriage contract was to be signed; and Marie went out into the grounds of the château early in the morning with despair in her heart, feeling that she would certainly be forced to carry out her aunt's wish. However, as she stood there with the sympathetic Sulpizio, she suddenly heard the sound of distant drums and fifes; and as the merry "rataplan" drew nearer, she recognised with joy that it was the marching tune of her brave soldier friends.

It was indeed the Eleventh Regiment on their way from the war; and as they had to pass the Château Berkenfeld, they made a halt there in order to greet

their adopted Daughter.

Marie was delighted at this happy meeting with her old comrades; but her crowning joy was the moment when she was clasped in the strong arms of her beloved Tonio, who was now the commanding officer of the Regiment, having been thus rapidly promoted for his gallantry on the battlefield. Tonio soon boldly announced that his military rank now rendered him a fit suitor for Marie; and he at once asked her hand in marriage of the Marchioness, a request in which he was loyally supported by the whole Regiment, who were eager that their darling should wed the man she loved, and not be forced into a marriage she detested.

But the Marchioness haughtily refused to give her consent, being bent upon her niece wedding into an aristocratic family; and since the notary had already arrived (although the prospective bridegroom had been detained at Court), she declared that Marie must sign the marriage contract without further

delay.

On hearing this cruel resolve Tonio stoutly declared that, contract or no contract, he should certainly carry off his sweetheart by force; and then the Marchioness, in order to avoid such a scandal, revealed to Marie that she was not merely her niece, but actually her own daughter, the child of a marriage she had contracted with a poor Savoyard Captain, at whose death she had concealed the whole affair, lest the knowledge of such a mésalliance should injure her in the good graces of her aristocratic relatives.

She therefore now claimed parental authority over her daughter; and Marie, feeling that she could not refuse to obey her own mother, consented to sign the marriage contract, declaring, however, that it would break her heart to part from her beloved Tonio

The gentle submission of the despairing girl, however, at last overcame the hard resolve of her mother; and the sight of Marie's deep affection for her humbly-born lover brought back to the proud Marchioness the remembrance of happy days when she herself had loved. With tear-dimmed eyes and softened heart, she now called the lovers to her side; and placing Marie's hand in that of Tonio, she gave her consent to their union.

The contract with the son of the Duchess was thus promptly broken off; and whilst Marie and her lover rejoiced together, the delighted soldiers raised mighty cheers for the happiness of their beloved Daughter of the Regiment.

MARTHA

THE Lady Henrietta was dull. She sat one summer morning in the gilded boudoir of her fine house at Richmond and heaved sigh upon sigh, for although Maid-of-Honour to Queen Anne, and the loveliest and most fascinating of all the Court beauties, she found no satisfaction in life. She was wearied to death of balls and routs, of the ceaseless flatteries of her many admirers, and of the tiresome monotony of Court life; and, satiated with pleasure, she had retired to her own home for a few days' respite, to indulge in vapours to her heart's content.

Her merry little waiting-maid, Nancy, sat watching her mistress with anxious eyes, not knowing what to make of this new mood; and at last she said: "Surely, my lady, you are to be envied, with your high position, your dazzling beauty and social success! Why, then, mope, when such joys are still

to be had?"

"But I am weary of just those very joys, Nancy!" answered the pleasure-sated Court lady, pettishly. "And unless I can find some new interest or

excitement soon, I shall die of dulness!"

Just then a footman announced "Lord Tristan Mickleford!" and a stout, middle-aged gentleman of foppish manners, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, entered the room. He was a cousin and would-be admirer of the handsome Maid-of-Honour; and howing elaborately before her, he began to make courtly speeches in exaggerated language, putting himself at her service for the day, and offering to escort her to any amusement she wished to indulge in. But

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the spoilt beauty turned away impatiently, declaring heartlessly that his society only bored her; and then, hearing sounds of merriment coming from without, she ran to the open window to see what was going on.

A group of gay country maidens and youths were passing by on their way to the statute fair at Richmond, where they would stand in ranks to be hired as servants for the ensuing year, according to a local custom; and the sight of these merry rustics suddenly suggested a daring frolic to the bored Henrietta, who sprang to her feet and exclaimed: "No more dulness to-day! We will dress ourselves in peasant garb, Nancy, and go to the fair as country wenches seeking a master! Twill amuse us vastly, and perhaps someone will hire us as servants. Oh, what a frolic! And you shall come too, my good

Tristan, as our protecting brother."

The foppish Lord Tristan was shocked and dismayed at the scheme, protesting pompously that it was quite beneath his rank and dignity to mingle in the motley crew of a fair; but upon Henrietta declaring she would never speak to him again unless he obeyed her sovereign will in this matter, he gave a feeble consent, and grumblingly allowed himself to be garbed as a country bumpkin. By the time he was ready, his mischievous cousin joined him again with Nancy, both of them attired in homespun, with short bright skirts, neat bodices, and quaint head-dresses, certainly the prettiest and smartest peasant maidens ever seen in those parts; and full of gaiety and eager excitement, the two girls dragged off their unwilling swain to the fair.

When they arrived upon the scene, the business of the day was at its height; and quickly noting the long row of country wenches standing at one side waiting to be hired as domestic servants, Henrietta determined to join their ranks. She adroitly invented an excuse for getting rid of the disgusted Lord Tristan for a short time, and then, bubbling

over with mirth, the two saucy girls took up their

stand amidst the serving-maids.

Amongst the busy crowd were two handsome wellto-do young farmers, by name Plunket and Lionel. who owned a joint-farm; and being in need of domestic help, they had come to the statute fair in order to hire a couple of wenches. These two, though loving each other as such, were not brothers, but had lived together since early childhood. Neither could recollect much of their first acquaintance, knowing little beyond the fact that Plunket's parents had rescued Lionel's father, a stranger and fugitive, from danger and destruction, and that the mysterious stranger, before dying, had bequeathed a ring to his orphan son, with the injunction that should he ever be in distress, to send it to the Oueen, when his whole fate might be changed. Not being able to discover anything further about the birth or rank of the orphan left to their charge, the honest farmer and his wife brought him up with their own son; and when the farm at length came into the hands of the young Plunket, he made Lionel share his inheritance with him.

As the young farmers passed down the rows of country wenches, they presently caught sight of Lady Henrietta and Nancy; and being greatly struck with their good looks and smart appearance, they went up to the two girls at once, and began to bargain with them, offering considerably higher wages than they had ever paid before. Henrietta, enjoying the frolic more and more, and delighted to see that the handsome Lionel was struck with her beauty, threw him a roguish glance, and recklessly accepted his offer, giving her name as Martha; and the merry Nancy, willing enough to follow where her lively mistress led, gave her word also.

The young farmers, pleased at having secured two such attractive serving-maids, at once paid over the earnest-money, by which they were bound to themfor a whole year's service, and then, having no further business at the fair, they desired the girls to follow them to the farm, that they might begin their duties at once.

Then Henrietta and Nancy, more amused than ever, broke out into peals of laughter, declaring that they had only given their word in a joking manner, and never intended to hire themselves out at all; but their merriment soon ended when the two young farmers, indignant at such conduct, calmly informed them that, having taken earnest-money, they were bound by law to render service for a whole year, according to the custom of the district. The local sheriff who presided over the statute-hiring ratified what they said, and ordered the girls to follow their new masters at once; and then Henrietta, seeing that she had carried her escapade too far, was in great distress, not daring to disclose her true name and rank for fear of the scandal coming to the ears of the Oueen.

Lord Tristan returned at this juncture, and full of wrath at what had happened, tried to withdraw the frightened girls from the fair; but the country folks, indignant at the statute rule being broken, set upon him at once, and quickly dragged him to

the other end of the field.

Meanwhile the two young farmers bore their newly-hired servants off to the farm without more ado; for Henrietta now thought it best for the present to submit quietly to the indignity she had brought

on herself, hoping to escape later on.

On arriving at the farm, the triumphant masters soon discovered that they had made a very bad bargain as to the working capabilities of their new maids; for neither of the girls could do a stroke of domestic work, and were extremely indignant on being bidden to perform the smallest service. Nancy, indeed, went further still, being bent on mischief, for she soon developed a destructive tendency; and Plunket, who had undertaken to instruct her in her duties, had his hands full in preventing

her from breaking all his domestic goods and chattels.

Whilst these two were squabbling in the kitchen, Henrietta condescended to receive a lesson in spinning from the handsome Lionel, whose gentle manners and naturally aristocratic bearing had impressed her pleasantly from the first; and Lionel, whose enthusiastic admiration for the supposed "Martha" was developing into love at a most alarming rate, found the task a very pleasant one. The touch of the soft white hand thrilled him as he guided it through the intricacies of the spinning-wheel; and the beautiful girl made such a charming picture as she sat there, playing at work, that he was filled with delight.

Elated at having made such an easy conquest of the young farmer, whose ardent glances soon betrayed the state of his susceptible heart, Henrietta quickly recovered her good spirits; and later on she was even persuaded to sing by the indulgent master, who was already recklessly encouraging his new

handmaid in idleness.

So the bewitching Martha sang "The Last Rose of Summer," in a voice so soft and sweet that Lionel was enthralled; and when the song came to an end, he flung himself impetuously at her feet, intoxicated with delight, declaring passionately that he loved her, and that, so far from being his servant, he now desired to make her his wife. Lady Henrietta, astonished and dismayed at the quick development of the passion she had so carelessly excited, took refuge in laughter, and poor Lionel, seeing his raptures thus treated with lightness, was plunged into wretchedness.

Plunket now returned with the saucy Nancy, whose outrageous behaviour had by this time nearly driven him frantic, though her tantalizing charms had already won his heart; and ordering the two unsatisfactory servants to bed, he declared to Lionel he feared they had made a bad bargain.

When Lady Henrietta and Nancy found themselves alone in their chamber they had no intention of going to rest, and as soon as they made sure that the two young farmers had also retired for the night, they began to think of some way of escape. Just as they were laying their plans, they heard a voice calling to them from outside, and quickly throwing up the window, beheld with much relief the portly form of Lord Tristan Mickleford standing below. He hastily explained in a nervous whisper that he had a carriage waiting for them beyond the farmyard; and eagerly clambering down from the low windowsill, Henrietta soon made her way to the welcome vehicle. Nancy quickly followed, and the movements of the fugitives were so silent that it was not until the carriage was driving off that the defrauded masters were aroused.

Then, when they found that their pretty maids had flown, the two young farmers were full of indignation; and next day they searched the whole country-side for news of the runaways. Their efforts, were however, in vain, for by this time, Henrietta had returned gladly to her Court life. But a strange sadness now frequently came over her spirits, for her heart had been more deeply touched by the honest affection of the manly Lionel than she was willing to admit, and she longed to see him again, even though she knew the difference in their rank forbade her to give him hope.

Lionel was now filled with despair, the loss of his beautiful Martha only increasing his passion; and he still continued to make inquiries for her, accompanied in his search by the faithful Plunket, who also desired to find Mistress Nancy, whose mischievous

glances had bewitched him.

Then, at last, the two lovers met their charmers

once again.

One day a grand royal hunt took place in Richmond forest, and Lady Henrietta, as one of the Maids-of-Honour, joined the ranks of the huntresses,

together with her maid, Nancy. Soon after the hunt had commenced, however, Henrietta withdrew a little apart from the gay company, and wandering down a lonely glade, soon gave herself up to the melancholy thoughts that had lately taken possession of her.

But Nancy, merry and lively as ever, went on with the rest of the party; and presently, to her surprise and utter consternation, she came suddenly face to face with the young farmer, Plunket, who happened to be strolling through Richmond forest that day,

on his way from the village.

No sooner did Plunket set eyes on Nancy than he recognised her instantly as his runaway maid; and accosting her without ceremony, he ordered her to return to his service at once. At first Nancy tried to put him off by laughing and pretending not to know him; but when Plunket seized her arm gently, but firmly, insisting that she should follow him, the girl was alarmed for her mistress's sake, and turning to the surprised ladies and gentlemen, she called on them to come to her rescue.

Immediately the indignant party closed about Plunket, buffeting and belabouring him with their hunting-crops, and the unfortunate farmer was

obliged to beat a retreat as best he could.

Meanwhile Lionel, who was also walking in the forest not far away, had wandered unconsciously into the very same glade that Henrietta had selected for her lonely ramble, and presently approaching a lady of quality garbed in the rich habit of a fashionable huntress, he recognised, to his utter astonishment, the beautiful features of his beloved Martha. In great delight, he hurried forward with outstretched arms to greet her, and at first, Henrietta, overjoyed in spite of herself, uttered an exclamation of pleasure. Then, recollecting that she would be disgraced should the knowledge of her escapade become known at Court, and seeing that her companions in the chase were already approach-

ing her, she suddenly turned cold, and haughtily

denied the young farmer's acquaintance.

But Lionel, his passion enhanced at again beholding the object of his affection, determined to assert his rights as a master, and commanded her eagerly to return to his employ; and then Henrietta, afraid of what might follow, called out to her companions for help, declaring that Lionel was a madman.

Instantly the rest of the hunting party crowded around, and when Lionel heard Henrietta addressed on all sides as "My Lady," he saw in a flash that a trick had been played upon him at the statute fair, and that this fine Court beauty had only been amusing herself at his expense. Knowing now that his love could never hope to be requited, he was filled with disappointment and despair, and he began to pour forth such scornful, passionate reproaches, that the huntsmen, thinking him mad indeed, closed around and attempted to drive him away.

At this moment Plunket appeared on the scene once more, and quickly joining in the fray, he at length managed to drag his friend away, and returned with him to the farm.

Here poor Lionel, overcome by grief and refusing to be comforted, feeling that his beloved one was now lost to him for ever, quickly fell into a delirious state bordering on frenzy, and Plunket, fearing for his friend's life, at length sent a message to Lady Henrietta (whose true rank and name he had quickly discovered), entreating her to visit the farm at least once again. With this message he also sent the ring that had been bequeathed to Lionel by his mysterious father, requesting the Maid-of-Honour to place it in the hands of the Queen; for he felt that this was a fitting time for the token to be presented, since his poor friend could not well be in greater distress, nor in more urgent need of help.

When Lady Henrietta received the message, she was conscience-stricken and filled with grief, for she had instantly regretted her cruel treatment of Lionel in the forest, and could no longer hide from herself the fact that she loved him with her whole heart. She determined to go to the farm at once, and humbly accept the love of this honest, faithful wooer; but before starting she sought an interview with her royal mistress, into whose hands she delivered the ring that Plunket had sent.

A wonderful surprise was now in store for all; for the carefully-hoarded ring brought back a longforgotten incident to the Queen, and proved to her that the young farmer, Lionel, was in reality the only son of the unfortunate Earl of Derby, who, wrongfully accused of treason, had been forced to

flight, and had died in exile.

The royal lady determined to heal the wrongs inflicted on the father by restoring the son to his rightful rank and possessions; and the joyful tidings of this happy change in his fortunes was carried to

Lionel by the fair Henrietta herself.

The young Earl was duly reinstated to the proper rank, wealth, and Court favour to which he was entitled; but, to the utter grief of Henrietta, the sufferings to which her thoughtless conduct had subjected him had unhinged her lover's mind, and rendered his memory of all the incidents connected

with her a blank.

Henrietta was in despair, for by this time Plunket and the merry Nancy had already made up their minds to marry, and she longed to follow their example. At length a gleam of hope came to her, for having read that when a sudden shock unhinges a person's reason the mind can sometimes be restored to its proper balance by repeating the incidents that first caused the calamity, she determined to try the experiment with Lionel.

Easily prevailing upon her friends to help her in the scheme, she caused an impromptu fair to be held in her own gardens, setting up stalls and booths in exact imitation of the Richmond statutes. with a rank of serving-maids waiting to be hired; and when all was ready, she dressed herself in peasant garb once more, and took up her stand with Nancy

amongst the country girls.

Then Plunket led Lionel through the show and down the ranks of pretty maids as he had done on the actual day of the fair; and, as all had hoped, the light of memory gradually brought back the wandering reason of the young Earl, and restored his mind to its normal state.

The moment he beheld Henrietta in her dainty peasant dress, he recognised the beautiful Martha whose charms had won his heart; and a clear recollection of all the events succeeding the statute fair coming suddenly upon him, he hurried forward and clasped her in his arms with great joy, knowing now that there was no further obstacle to their union.

So the mock fair had served its purpose, and a short time afterwards the young Earl of Derby, restored to reason and happiness, was married to Lady Henrietta, whom he had learned to love so dearly as Martha the serving-maid.



GOUNOD

FAUST

In a certain city of Germany, during the early years of the sixteenth century, a lonely student sat in his laboratory late one night, musing on the vanity of all human knowledge, and railing at the powerlessness of man to unravel the secret mysteries of Nature.

He was an old man who had spent the whole of his life in the quest of learning; and not without considerable success, for Faust the Alchemist, the laborious student of magic and mystery, the seekerout of hidden wonders, had gained much repute amongst his fellows, and was even looked upon with awe.

But the accumulation of knowledge had brought no satisfaction to his soul, for the magic powers he sought were still withheld from him; and now, as the old man sat in his silent chamber, lonely and unloved, he felt that his ceaseless toil had been in vain, since in the pursuit of learning he had let the joys and beauties of life pass him by, and nothing but disappointment remained. Of what use, he thought despairingly, was all his vaunted knowledge, when it could not bring back to him his lost youth, with its faith, its enthusiastic glow, its raptures, its ambitions, and its fond dreams of hope and happiness?

Filled with sudden rage at the impotency of the vain learning he had sacrificed his precious youth to attain, the old man seized a goblet containing a poisonous draught, and, determined to live no longer, he was just about to drain its contents, when the

song of a band of merry peasants on their way to the fields—for the day was now dawning—arrested him in the fatal act.

Faust put down the goblet with a shaking hand and listened to the fresh young voices of the peasants, which unconsciously brought back to him the desire to live; but finding that their song was all of love, hope, and prayer, he fell into another paroxysm of rage, and called wildly on the powers of evil to come to his aid.

Instantly there was a flash of unearthly light, and a terrific crash of thunder, and the Prince of Evil

himself stood before him!

Affrighted at this sudden answer to his rash invocation, Faust shrank back in horror; but the Demon, who, clad in brilliant red garments, with a flashing sword at his side, had taken on the form of a gallant of the period, under the name of Mephistopheles, approached his intended victim, and demanded of him in mocking tones what he desired. Did he want gold? Or glory? Or a kingdom?

The old man shook his head, for none of these things had any charm for him, and he still feared his awful visitor; but at last, tempted by the one fierce desire still left to him, he could restrain himself no longer, and passionately implored the Demon to bring back to him his lost youth, with all its entrancing delights and capacities for sweet enjoyment.

Mephistopheles replied that he had power to grant his wish, and could instantly restore him to a glorious youth; but for one price only would he do this thing—the price of Faust's own soul! As he spoke, the Demon drew forth a parchment, and requested the old man to sign it, that it might be an agreement between them; but Faust hastily drew back, hesitating to enter into such a dreadful compact.

Then Mephistopheles, seeing that further temptation was needed before he could gain his ends, caused by his supernatural power a wonderful vision to Faust 107

appear; and it seemed to Faust that the walls of his chamber suddenly melted away, and that in their place he beheld, as in a picture, a beautiful village maiden, who sat spinning beside a cottage door. The angelic looks of this lovely maiden filled the heart of Faust with a passionate desire to possess her, and upon the Demon assuring him that this wish should also be gratified if he would agree to his terms, the old man seized his pen and recklessly signed the parchment.

The vision slowly faded away, and then the Demon, taking from the table the discarded poison goblet—the contents of which he hastily changed into a magic potion—bade his now secured prey to swallow

the draught.

Faust eagerly did so, and immediately he was transformed from an old man into a handsome youth of noble appearance, with quick young blood flowing through his veins, and a heart throbbing with impulsive feeling and enjoyment of life. He found himself splendidly clad in the rich garments of a noble, and plentifully supplied with gold; and, determined to make the most of the pleasures now brought once again within his grasp, the rejuvenated Faust sallied forth with his evil companion. For Mephistopheles had no intention of leaving his victim until the time came to claim him for his own; and upon Faust impatiently desiring to make the acquaintance of the lovely maiden shown to him in the vision, the cunning Demon, eager to lead him further astray in the paths of evil, took him at once to the picturesque old city of Nuremburg, where the fair object of his passion dwelt in innocence and peace.

As the two strangers made their way into Nuremburg, they found that a fair was being held there, and in the fair ground at the entrance to the town a very lively scene was taking place. Gay students, pretty maidens, old men, and prim matrons, all clad in holiday attire, were laughing,

chattering, and bargaining on every side; and a group of soldiers, just about to depart for the wars, were standing under the trees outside a quaint old inn, drinking a gay farewell to their citizen friends.

Amongst these soldiers was a young man named Valentine, who alone appeared grave amongst the merry throng; and on being rallied by his careless companions for his dull spirits, he told them that his heart was heavy at the thought of leaving behind him his orphan sister, Margarita, a beautiful and virtuous young maiden, who, though placed in the charge of a worthy woman, would be left many months without a brother's loving care. Upon hearing this, a fair youth named Siebel, who, though scarcely more than a boy, had already the dauntless spirit of a man, came forward and declared enthusiastically that he would guard and watch over Margarita as a brother, in his stead; and Valentine, somewhat comforted by this assurance, pressed his young friend's hand gratefully, and joined in the parting merriment of his companions.

Whilst the soldiers were thus singing songs together and drinking their farewell bumpers, Mephistopheles suddenly joined the group, and declared that he would sing them a song also; and though the revellers shrank back instinctively from the evil-looking stranger, they felt themselves power-

less to resist his mocking tone of command.

When the song came to an end, Mephistopheles began to foretell certain events in the lives of those present, and seeing a look of scorn and horror in the eyes of young Siebel, who unconsciously felt the dark stranger to be an enemy, he seized the youth's hand, and pronounced that every flower he touched henceforth should instantly wither and die.

Then, declaring that the wine offered to him was not worthy of the name, he struck with his sword a little cask surmounted by an effigy of Bacchus, which served as a sign to the inn, and instantly Faust 109

there gushed forth a stream of rich wine, with which

the revellers quickly filled their cups.

But no sooner had they swallowed the strange fluid than they felt it coursing through their veins and mounting to their brain like liquid fire, and Mephistopheles, laughing sardonically at their amazement and discomfiture, filled a goblet himself, and drank it off to the health of "Fair Margarita!"

Enraged at hearing the name of his pure young sister thus lightly uttered by the sinister, fortune-telling stranger, Valentine resentfully drew his sword and rushed upon him, followed by Siebel and the other gallants standing about; but Mephistopheles quickly drew a circle around him with the point of his weapon, and his assailants then found themselves powerless, since their swords instantly snapped in half when thrust within the magic circle. Seeing that infernal powers were being used against them, the gallants held up aloft the hilts of their swords; and before the Sign of the Cross, the Demon cringed abjectly, and was compelled to retire.

The soldiers now made their final farewells, and went off to join the departing regiment; and soon after they had gone, Mephistopheles again appeared with Faust, who was by this time all eagerness to see the fair object of his vision. In answer to his oft-repeated impatient demand, Mephistopheles at last pointed to a fair-haired maiden now approaching them with a slow step and downcast eyes—a maiden of exquisite beauty, with all the charms of guileless

innocence and perfect faith.

It was Margarita, the beloved sister of Valentine; and as Faust gazed upon her, he recognised with rapture the form and features of the lovely maiden shown to him by the Demon in his laboratory.

Hurrying forward with delight, he bowed gracefully, and begged to be allowed to escort her to her home; but Margarita was accustomed to treat the advances of gallants with coldness, and so, though her heart throbbed with sudden joy as she met the ardent

gaze of the handsome stranger, she replied modestly that she was but a humble maiden who needed no such escort. She then passed quietly on her way; and the discomfited Faust gazed after her with eyes of passionate admiration and tender longing, for an uncontrollable love for the sweet maiden was already surging in his heart.

Mephistopheles determined to foster and encourage this passion, hoping to secure by means of it a second victim in the unconscious Margarita, whose innocent soul he longed to destroy; and late that evening, when darkening shadows were beginning to fall, he led the willing Faust to the humble cot-

tage where the fair maiden dwelt.

As they approached the flower-laden garden, the young Siebel came forth and passed down the street: for this enthusiastic youth also loved Margarita, and came to leave flowers for her every evening. On this particular evening, however, he had had a strange experience, for each flower he plucked had withered in his hand, and remembering the words of the mysterious stranger he had met that afternoon, he had been filled with dismay. But suddenly he bethought himself to dip his fingers in a little bowl of holy water that was placed within the porch of Margarita's cottage; and then, to his joy, he found that the curse was powerless, and that the blossoms he gathered after this act remained fresh. So laying his offering as usual upon a seat outside the porch, he came away; and immediately afterwards Faust and Mephistopheles entered the garden.

Noticing Siebel's flowers upon the rustic seat, Mephistopheles produced a casket of valuable jewels and placed it beside them; and then he withdrew with Faust, into the shadows, to watch the result.

Presently the lovely Margarita came forth into the garden with a pensive air; for she was thinking of the handsome young cavalier who had accosted her in the afternoon, and whose passionate glances of admiration had thrilled her through and through,

and set her maiden heart throbbing so wildly. She soon noticed poor Siebel's flowers, and tenderly laid them aside with an indulgent smile; and then seeing the strange casket, she took it up wonderingly and

opened it.

An exclamation of childish delight escaped her on beholding the dazzling jewels within, and unable to resist the temptation of adorning herself with them, she tremblingly clasped the pretty baubles about her snowy neck and arms. A little mirror had been artfully laid within the casket, and as she gazed at the reflection of herself thus loaded with glittering gems and ropes of priceless pearls, she wondered what her noble gallant would think if he could behold her now, adorned as a princess.

Just then Dame Martha, the worthy, but not very vigilant, guardian in whose charge Margarita had been left during her brother's absence at the wars, came forth from the cottage; and admiring the sparkling jewels—which Margarita, now ashamed of her momentary vanity, endeavoured to remove—she declared that they must have been sent by some noble

adorer.

At this moment Faust and Mephistopheles came forth from the shadows to which they had retreated, and the latter, declaring to Martha that he had important news for her, soon enticed the dame, with many flattering phrases, to leave her precious

charge and wander with him to one side.

Left alone with Margarita, Faust approached the beautiful maiden eagerly, and, unable to control his feelings any longer, passionately declared his love for her; and Margarita, though she resisted his advances for some time, at length gave way to the answering love in her own heart, and resigned herself to the tender embraces of the handsome cavalier.

After this the enraptured lovers frequently met; for the fiendish Mephistopheles continually encouraged and aided Faust in his passionate but lawless pursuit of Margarita, never once relaxing his

demoniacal temptations until the ruin of the poor girl was assured, and her innocence destroyed.

The joys of a rapturous love were not long permitted to the betrayed Margarita, for as the months went on, and her dishonour became known, she had to submit to the scorn and sneers of her old companions, who showed little pity for the frailty of one whose virtue had always been held up to them as a pattern; and all avoided her, except the faithful Siebel, who still sought to bring comfort to the gentle maiden whom a true and tender love had led astray.

Full of grief and remorse, Margarita sought refuge in prayer and repentance; but even in the church, the mocking Demon, whose cruel temptation she had been unable to resist, would find her out, and

fill her heart with fear and despair.

It was whilst Margarita was praying one evening in the church near her humble cottage home that the soldiers returned from the wars; and the brave Valentine—who had covered himself with glory in the campaign—upon arriving in the town, at once set off to receive the praises and greetings of his beloved sister.

At the door of the cottage, however, he was met by the unhappy Siebel, from whose agitated words he quickly learnt of what had happened during his absence; and full of grief and anger, he rushed within, to pour forth reproaches upon the erring sister who had thus brought a stain upon his name.

Siebel ran to the church to acquaint Margarita with her brother's return; and no sooner had he gone than Mephistopheles appeared with Faust, who was still unable to keep away from the fair maiden

he had betrayed.

He was, however, sad and remorseful, and it was his evil companion who, to entice Margarita from her chamber, struck a guitar and sang a light serenade beneath the window.

When the song came to an end, Valentine rushed

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out from the cottage, sword in hand, and knowing that the betrayer of his sister stood before him, he challenged Faust to combat. Instantly their blades clashed together, and Faust, aided by the diabolical intervention of Mephistopheles, quickly overcame his opponent, and Valentine fell to the ground mortally wounded.

At this moment, Siebel and Margarita came forth from the church; and seeing what had happened, the wretched maiden, with a loud cry of woe, flung herself upon the prostrate body of her brother, beseeching him to have mercy, and pardon her. But Valentine roughly flung her from him, declaring that her sin had slain him; and with his last breath he cursed her passionately as he fell back lifeless.

Horror-stricken at this awful calamity, of which she was the cause, the unhappy Margarita was filled with unutterable grief and despair; and her already harassed mind giving way under the weight of woe now fallen upon it, in a sudden fit of mad frenzy she took the life of the poor babe who was soon afterwards born to her. For this terrible, though unconscious act, she was immediately flung into prison and condemned to death; but even as she lay in the gloomy cell awaiting her execution, her weary soul, worn out with suffering and grief, was already

Faust was now filled with remorse and despair for the sad fate the gratification of his selfish passion had brought upon the beautiful maiden who had loved him so tenderly; and on the night before the execution, aided by Mephistopheles, he gained access to her cell, and eagerly besought her to fly with him.

preparing to leave its earthly abode.

But at first, Margarita, whose mind was still wandering, scarcely heeded what was said to her; and then, as her thoughts grew clearer, and her gaze suddenly fell on the sinister form of Mephistopheles, who looked upon her exultingly with eyes like coals of fire, she realised the danger of this new temptation

to return to a life of sin, and spurned her lover's offer.

Before the return of Valentine she had begun to place her reliance in prayer and repentance, and now these holier feelings once more gained the ascendancy over her, and she fell upon her knees to pray. It was in vain that the despairing Faust implored her to escape with him, and the exulting Demon tempted her to yield; and at last, with a final prayer for pardon and mercy, she fell back upon her wretched couch, and expired at their feet.

Mephistopheles uttered a cry of fiendish triumph; but at that moment a chorus of angelic voices was heard proclaiming forgiveness for the repentant sinner, whose faithful prayers had reached the Mercy-Seat on High.

Faust, awed and overcome with sorrow, sank to his knees in prayer, and as the Evil Spirit, thus balked of his expected prey, shrank back defeated, the prison walls opened, and the released and ransomed soul of Margarita was borne upwards to its celestial home.

PHILEMON AND BAUCIS

One stormy evening, long ago, in the mythical days of the gods and heroes of the Ancients, a poor peasant named Philemon and his wife, Baucis, were resting peacefully in their humble cottage, where they had lived together for many years of happy wedded life. They were now growing old; but although the shadows of life's eventide were fast deepening around them, they did not waste their remaining days in uttering vain regrets after departed youth, because the love in their hearts was as fresh and green as ever, and happiness was still theirs, in

spite of poverty and old age.

As they sat together in the twilight this evening, whilst the sound of the gathering storm without came every now and again to their ears, they were rejoicing with each other because of the joy that yet remained to them. Though they could no longer join in the merry dances and wild pleasures of the gay young folks around them, that fact did not trouble them at all, since contentment was theirs: and they declared to one another that even in the days of their youth they were not happier than now in their old age, for, as the years went on, the love in their faithful hearts grew deeper and stronger than ever. Since they enjoyed such perfect love and harmony, they did not envy the careless youths and maidens, but resigned themselves cheerfully to old age, knowing well that life would be sweet to the very end whilst love remained to them.

Thus did the contented old couple talk happily together until darkness fell; and not even a band of merry Bacchantes who presently danced past the cottage door, on wildest revels bent, could draw from either a sigh of regret for the lost pleasures of

youth.

When, however, the song of the Bacchantes had died away in the distance, Baucis declared that it was now time for the evening meal, and went into an inner room to prepare the humble food that was sweeter to them than the luxuries of the rich, since it was procured by their own honest labour, and seasoned with love.

When she had gone, Philemon busied himself by making the fire burn more brightly; and whilst engaged in this homely task, he was interrupted by an imperative knock at the cottage door. By this time the storm was raging with great violence; and when, upon opening the door, he was accosted by two strangers who craved shelter from the wind and rain, Philemon at once invited them to enter, being distressed that travellers should be out on such a

wild night.

Now, though the poor peasant little guessed it, these two strangers were in reality Jupiter, the Father of the Gods, and Vulcan, the God of Fire and master of the workers in metal, who were visiting the earth thus disguised in order to bring punishment upon certain disobedient mortals who had offended them. Having, however, been overtaken by this terrible storm, brought about by Jupiter's own commands as his means of punishment, they had sought refuge at the first homestead they came to, hoping that the owner might grant them shelter, and thus prove himself to be more worthy than his neighbours, upon whom the angry god's vengeance was now about to fall.

Their hopes were realised; for Philemon received them with great kindness and hospitality, leading them to the warm hearthstone, where he proceeded to divest them of their wet cloaks, declaring it was a delight to him to welcome guests whom the gods

must surely have sent.

Jupiter was very well pleased at this reception; but Vulcan, being in an exceeding ill-humour, and still smarting from the recent intrigues of his beautiful wife Venus with the gods Mars and Mercury, only grumbled and growled at having been dragged from his accustomed work against his will, and even called down curses upon the gods who were the cause of his domestic woes and of his present plight. Upon hearing this, Philemon, being a devout upholder of the honour of the gods whom he served so faithfully, sternly reproved the stranger for thus speaking irreverently of the great Immortals; but Jupiter laughingly bade the peasant not to heed the ill-humour of his companion, who was in a strange mood that night.

Philemon, having thus extended a hearty welcome to his unexpected guests, retired to the inner room to help his wife prepare a repast for them; and when he had departed on this hospitable errand, Jupiter began to rally Vulcan on his gloomy looks and sulky temper. But the cross-grained, deformed god was not to be pacified, and declared that he preferred to be left working with his faithful Cyclops in his subterranean forges, where no one dared to poke fun at him for his ill-humours and ugly appearance, and where he was not plagued by the sight of his faithless wife bestowing her bewitching smiles on other

admirers.

Whilst Jupiter was laughing over his companion's complaints, and gaily bidding him not to care for aught done by one so fair and fickle, Baucis entered the room, bearing a jug full of goat's milk, which she placed before the visitors, saying that Philemon would shortly follow with ripe fruits, which he was even now gathering in the garden. Being even better pleased with the cheerful, kindly looks of Baucis, Jupiter entered into conversation with her; and when, on questioning her as to the reason of her evident contentment and happiness, she replied that this was due to the all-absorbing love that she and

her husband had for each other, which made them count poverty and old age as nothing, he was filled with amazement.

"What!" he exclaimed. "You can still talk of

love, even now that you are growing old?"

"Oh, yes," answered Baucis, with a smile of pure joy. "For love has been the guiding star of our simple lives; and now that our days are drawing to a close, our only regret is that we cannot start over again, and tread the same sweet path side by side a second time!"

At this moment, Philemon returned with a basket of fine ripe fruit from the garden, and a vessel of sparkling water from the spring; and placing these on the table beside the goat's milk, he invited his guests to draw near and partake of the humble food, which was, nevertheless, the best that his poor home could offer.

Jupiter, delighted at the gracious hospitality of the good old couple, gladly accepted the invitation; and having drained the vessel of water to satisfy his own thirst, he bade Baucis to fill out yet another cupful from the now empty flagon, for Vulcan. Baucis was greatly surprised at the strange bidding; but on receiving the command from Jupiter a second time, she inclined the empty vessel, and to her utter astonishment a stream of rich red wine immediately

flowed into the goblet!

The poor peasants now knew that their strange guests were not ordinary mortals, and were in some fear as to who they might really be; but Jupiter, though still retaining his incognito, quickly reassured them, saying that he and his companion had been sent by the gods to bring dire punishment on the disobedient mortals in that neighbourhood who had offended them. He then bade them listen to the terrific thunderstorm which was now raging, and which would certainly destroy those on whom the gods' vengeance was to fall; but when the old couple began to tremble for their own safety, he told them

to be of good comfort, since they should be spared, because of the hospitality and kindness they had shown to two travellers in distress. He then bade the wondering pair to lie down in peace, and rest securely until the morning, when they should awaken

to reap the reward of their good deed.

Philemon and Baucis, now feeling a delicious drowsiness creeping over their senses, obeyed the god's authoritative command, and gladly laid themselves down to sleep; and then, as they sank into a peaceful slumber, Jupiter cast a magic spell over them, by means of which their beautiful youth was completely restored to them, and their humble cottage at the same moment transformed into a noble

palace.

When morning dawned, the gods retired for awhile, that the rejuvenated pair might make their wonderful discovery alone. Baucis was the first to awaken; and, surprised at an unusual exhilaration of spirits, and at feeling the blood coursing merrily through her veins as in the days of her youth, she sprang to her feet and exclaimed as she now beheld the new grandeur around her, "I must be dreaming!" Then, on approaching her still sleeping husband, she was amazed to find him young and handsome as in the days of yore, when he had first won her love; and running to the mirror, her joy was complete when its reflection showed her that she also was now restored to beautiful youth, and was even fairer still than in the early flush of maidenhood long years ago!

"Philemon! Philemon! awake, my love, and rejoice!" she cried in delight; and when Philemon arose immediately at the sound of her sweet young voice, he also was astonished to find himself within a palatial mansion, and was utterly bewildered at the

sight of the lovely maiden before him.

"Who art thou, fair one?" he asked in awestruck tones. "Thou art beautiful as my beloved Baucis was in the days of her youth!"

But Baucis held the mirror up before his eyes, and bade him look at his own reflection; and when Philemon saw that he also had regained his handsome

youth, his joy was unbounded.

The happy pair now knew that this marvellous transformation must have been brought about by the influence of the gods, whose messengers they had entertained the previous evening; and overcome with gratitude and joy that the passion and delight of their youthful love was thus restored to them, they fell into each other's arms and rapturously embraced. The wondrous love of these two faithful hearts, though it had clung to them even in old age, had of necessity run in a calmer stream with advancing years; but now with youth and beauty once more before them, it flooded their hearts afresh with renewed life, and the all-absorbing desires and sweet joys of old again held them under magic sway.

For long the happy lovers rejoiced together in perfect bliss, regardless of time and heedless of the whole world; and then Baucis, growing suddenly timid and shy, broke coquettishly away from the embrace of Philemon, and ran laughing out into the

open air, to hide in the groves beyond.

As Philemon turned to follow her, the god Vulcan appeared in the doorway of the palace; and on beholding one whom he felt to be his benefactor, the grateful peasant fell on his knees before him and tendered his grateful thanks. Vulcan, however, was still sulky and ill-tempered, and so gruffly bade him keep his thanks to himself, since the sight of one so happy in his love filled him with envy; nor was he any better pleased when Philemon innocently expressed the desire that a faithful loving wife might also fall to his benefactor's share, for the alluring glances of his fickle Venus were more frequently bestowed on other lovers than on himself! Philemon soon left the taciturn god to his own devices, and ran off in pursuit of Baucis; and shortly afterwards Jupiter appeared. and questioned his companion as to whether the peasants were satisfied with

their changed lot.

Vulcan replied in an aggrieved tone that they seemed to be very much in love with one another; and presently catching sight of Baucis hiding amidst the bushes, he bade Jupiter to look on his own handiwork. Now, when Jupiter beheld the lovely maiden as she mischievously sped from tree to tree to avoid her fond pursuer, he was so enthralled with her sweet fresh beauty, that he suddenly desired to possess her for himself; and, god-like, he at once sought the means of gratifying his desire.

After giving vent to an extravagant outburst of admiration for this new object of his fickle fancy, he began to pursuade Vulcan to keep Philemon engaged for awhile; and presently the God of Iron departed on this thankless mission, leaving Jupiter free to go

in search of Baucis.

In a very short time, Jupiter came face to face with the lovely maiden, and began to address her in tones of admiration, at the same time giving her to understand his high estate; and when Baucis knew that it was the great god Jupiter to whom she was indebted for her restored youth, and who now graciously condescended to speak with her, she was so overcome that she sank humbly to her knees, trembling with fear. But Jupiter gently raised her from the ground, reassuring her in tender accents; and more and more enthralled by the maiden's exquisite loveliness, he began to pour forth passionate protestations of love, even imploring her to accept his overtures.

At first, Baucis repulsed him, shrinking back with frightened mien; but at length her timidity was overcome, and with a feeling of pardonable pride that her beauty was sufficient to cause even the Master of the Gods himself to plead for her love, she began to enjoy the situation, and even to coquette with her exalted admirer. So, when Jupiter, pleased with this first success, went further still, and next boldly

demanded the kiss that had been promised to Philemon, the maiden, having gone thus far, dared not refuse, for fear of offending the great god; but just at this moment, Philemon himself appeared on the scene, and was filled with amazement and indignation at beholding his beautiful wife in the arms of the stranger he had entertained the night before.

Baucis, quickly brought back to her senses by this timely interruption, instantly ran to her husband's side, begging him to curb his wrath until she could explain the matter to him; but Philemon's anger was not to be restrained, and he broke forth into passionate reproaches. Jupiter, though furious that Vulcan's carelessness should have caused this unwelcome interruption to his enjoyment, thought it prudent to retire for awhile; and when he had departed. Philemon's torrent of reproaches fell faster than ever. Even when Baucis explained that it was the Immortal Jupiter who had thus honoured her with his admiration, and whom he himself had addressed so roughly, the angry young peasant was not pacified, though he felt he was certainly doomed to destruction for crossing the pleasure of the mighty god; and he still continued to pour forth such scornful words, that Baucis also grew angry, and began to return his reproaches with equal passion.

Into the midst of this quarrel came Vulcan, who tried to make peace between them, grimly bidding Philemon to be of good cheer, since a matter of this sort was considered a mere trifle up in Olympus, where faithlessness in love was rather the rule than the exception; and he added that the fair daughters of earth were not likely to excel where goddesses failed.

But Philemon was not to be satisfied with any such doubtful comfort as this; and at last, in a paroxysm of anger, he overturned the household gods, which, in the form of statuettes, adorned his new abode, and then rushed wildly forth into the open air.

Baucis now began to weep bitterly, full of remorse

that she should have so carelessly grieved the heart of her faithful Philemon; for, though a natural passing feeling of vanity in her re-born beauty had led her to be pleased with the admiration of the great god, yet her love for her husband had never for a moment wavered, and she was filled with despair at the thought that she might have forfeited his regard,

which was her dearest possession.

After vainly trying to comfort the poor girl. Vulcan went off in search of Philemon, intending to act the part of peacemaker; and no sooner had he gone on this difficult errand, than Jupiter again appeared in the entrance. On beholding Baucis in tears, the amorous god hurried to her side, tenderly entreating her not to grieve, but rather to accept his tender caresses instead; but Baucis, determined not to let such alluring flatteries again overcome her nobler instincts, quickly withdrew herself from his embrace, and, falling on her knees before him, passionately besought him to take her fatal beauty away and make her old and wrinkled once more, that she might thus atone for the wrong she had done her faithful husband in listening even for a moment to words of love from other lips than his.

Jupiter was astounded at this request, thinking that the lovely maiden had taken leave of her senses;

but Baucis exclaimed again:

"Nay, my lord, give me back my old age again, when calm and peaceful days were mine, and pure and perfect love for my faithful Philemon was happiness enough for me! What care I for beauty that but enthrals the hearts of others? I only want my husband's love, and that was mine when old! Therefore, make me old again, my lord!"

As Baucis was pleading with Jupiter, Philemon approached with Vulcan; and on thus learning from her impassioned words that his wife still loved him, he ran forward with great gladness, and clasped her in his arms. Baucis, full of thankfulness that her fault was forgiven, returned his caresses with great

joy; and Jupiter, though at first furious that a mere mortal should be preferred before himself, the Master of the Gods, yet could not withhold his admiration at the sight of such perfect love as this.

Gradually, his anger melted away, and though he might still have gratified his passing fancy by force, had he wished to do so, it pleased him instead to be magnanimous; and presently he graciously announced to the faithful pair that they should still retain their youth and beauty, and that he would no longer come between their affection, but pour blessings upon them instead.

Having thus restored harmony to the earthly home they had deigned to visit, the two gods returned to Olympus; and Philemon and Baucis were left in peace to rejoice in their renewed youth and the perfect love that should again guide them surely along the path of happiness and contentment to their

lives' end!

ROMEO AND JULIET

In the city of Verona, a fierce private feud had existed for many years between the two noble families of Capulet and Montague; and to such a degree was this hatred carried that it was even shared by the servants, followers, and friends of the two rival houses, with the result that if a Capulet partisan met a Montague partisan, they invariably came to blows, and did not hesitate to shed each other's blood.

One evening it happened that a grand supper and masked ball was held at the palace of Lord Capulet; and to this festival all the chief lords and ladies of Verona were invited, with the exception, of course, of any members of the hated Montague

family.

However, the son of Lord Montague, whose name was Romeo, and who was a handsome and daring young man of a romantic disposition, boldly announced his intention of attending, uninvited, the revels at the house of his family foe; and, disguised in the dress of a pilgrim, and masked, he proceeded thither, accompanied by his bosom friends, Benvolio and Mercutio.

They were admitted, unquestioned, into the house, and mingled with the guests; and for awhile no one suspected that a Montague was taking part in the

revels.

Amongst the merry throng of dancers, Romeo very quickly noticed a beautiful young girl, whose wonderful grace and charm strangely fascinated him;

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and drawing the attention of his friends to this maiden, he exclaimed enthusiastically:

"O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear; Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear! So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows. The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand, And touching hers, make blessed my rude hand. Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night!"

This speech was overheard by a kinsman of the Capulets, a fiery youth named Tybalt, who immediately recognised the voice as that of one of his detested foemen; and, furious that a Montague should have thus dared to enter the house of Capulet, he challenged Romeo, and would have slain him then and there, had not old Lord Capulet himself interfered, and commanded him to sheathe his weapon, declaring that his enemy's son should remain for that night, since he was a young man spoken of in the city with honour and respect.

So peace was temporarily restored; and presently Romeo secured an opportunity of speaking with the lovely maiden whose fair looks had so quickly enslaved his heart. He found that the lady's disposition was as sweet and gentle as her looks; and to his joy she evinced great pleasure in his conversation, and returned his advances with many signs

of favour.

Presently, the maiden was called away, and when she had departed, Romeo learnt that she was the daughter of Lord Capulet, and that her name was Juliet.

Although filled with dismay that he had thus fallen in love with his enemy's daughter, and knowing that he would put himself in great danger should he venture to make further advances to her, Romeo was quite determined to see the lovely maiden again; and with this object in view, when the revels came to an end, he made his way into Lord Capulet's garden, thinking of this new joy which had already

filled his heart so completely.

To his delight, Juliet presently stepped out on to the balcony outside her chamber window; for she also was thinking of the strange, sweet love which had so suddenly filled her whole being at the ardent gaze of the handsome young pilgrim who had conversed with her at the ball, and wished to breathe her happy thoughts into the moonlit night.

But Juliet had also learnt that this noble youth, whose eager words had so quickly and unresistingly won her heart, was the son of Lord Montague, and that she ought to hate, rather than love him; and as she thought of this troublesome difficulty in the path

of her happiness, she murmured softly:

"O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father, and refuse thy name; Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy:
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague; What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot, Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part Belonging to a man. O, be some other name! What's in a name? that which we call a rose, By any other name would smell as sweet; So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called, Retain that dear perfection which he owes, Without that title: Romeo, doff thy name; And for thy name, which is no part of thee, Take all myself!"

On hearing these words, which proved to him that Juliet returned his love, Romeo crept softly forward and made his presence known to her, replying to her spoken thought thus:

"I take thee at thy word! Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd; Henceforth I never will be Romeo!"

Juliet was filled with joy at thus beholding the

object of her sweet reflections, giving him a tender greeting; and in answer to her question as to how he had effected his entrance into the garden without the knowledge of her kinsmen, Romeo replied:

"With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls; For stony limits cannot hold love out: And what love can do, that dares love attempt; Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me!

For a long while the lovers talked happily together; and in spite of the fact that Juliet had already been promised by her parents to a young man of noble family named Paris, she now gladly listened to Romeo's passionate declaration of love, and vowed that she would wed none other than he.

Several times their sweet converse was interrupted by Juliet's old nurse calling to her charge from within the chamber; and at last the maiden was obliged to tear herself away from the presence of her adoring lover, and retire to rest.

But Romeo did not return to his home immediately; and as dawn was already breaking, he made his way to a neighbouring monastery, in order to seek the help of a good old monk named Friar Laurence.

The old Friar, who had a deep affection for the youth, listened indulgently to his rapturous recital of the love he had conceived for the beautiful Juliet; but when Romeo eagerly besought him to unite them in marriage that very day, he was at first horrified at such a wild suggestion. However, when Romeo again begged him to comply with his request, the good father at last consented; for it now occurred to him that good might come of such a deed, since this union possibly would lead to the healing of the ancient feud between the two rival houses.

A little later in the day a message was secretly conveyed to Juliet, who, with the aid of her old nurse, in whom she had confided, found means to make her way to Friar Laurence's cell, where Romeo was awaiting her; and there the old monk performed the rite of marriage for the loving pair, and made them man and wife. Juliet then hurried back to her home with speed, fearing lest her absence should be remarked, for she did not dare to breathe a word of what had passed; and Romco, after declaring that he would see her again in the garden after nightfall, went to join his friends, Benvolio and Mercutio, whom he had arranged to meet in a certain street.

To his dismay, he found them engaged in a hot dispute with the fiery-tempered young Capulet, Tybalt, who, having met them in the street, had quickly sought a quarrel in order to vent his suppressed rage at their temerity of the night before; and in spite of Romeo's efforts to make peace between them, being now desirous of establishing more friendly relations with his beloved Juliet's kinsfolk, Mercutio and Tybalt drew their swords, and engaged in a deadly fight, which ended in Mercutio receiving a mortal wound.

On seeing his friend fall in an expiring condition, Romeo, full of grief and indignation, at once made a furious onslaught upon Tybalt; and in the struggle which followed he killed the Capulet noble.

By this time, the news of the encounter had spread in the city, and soon members of both the Capulet and Montague families hurried to the spot, together with the Prince of Verona himself, who had been

summoned by the watch.

Lady Capulet was overcome with grief at the deathof Tybalt, who was her nephew, and with tearful
entreaties insisted on Romeo's summary punishment;
and Lady Montague as earnestly defended her son's
action in avenging the death of his friend Mercutio.
The matter ended in the Duke declaring sentence of
immediate banishment upon Romeo; and, full of
despair, the young man concealed himself until
night-time in Friar Laurence's cell, being determined
to see Juliet again before leaving the city.

When darkness fell, Romeo made his way once more to the Capulet's garden, and, scaling the balcony, bade a long and passionate farewell to the weeping Juliet. With the first signs of dawn, he was compelled to depart, with a last fond embrace, and then, with a heavy heart, and reluctant steps, he made his way to Mantua, from whence his messengers and friends could keep him acquainted with all news concerning the fair young bride from whom he had been thus so cruelly parted.

Very soon after the departure of Romeo, Juliet found herself in a position of the utmost difficulty; for her parents determined that her marriage with the brilliant young Count Paris should take place without further delay, and the nuptials were an-

nounced to be celebrated a few days hence.

It was in vain that the dismayed Juliet, not daring to reveal the fact of her secret marriage with the banished Romeo, pleaded her extreme youth, her indifference to Paris, and the family mourning for their kinsman, Tybalt; for her parents were indignant at her unwillingness and disobedience to their wishes, and declared that they would cast her off for ever should she fail to accept Paris as her husband on the Thursday appointed.

Poor Juliet, full of woe and dismay, sighed

distractedly:

"Is there no pity sitting in the clouds That sees into the bottom of my grief?"

Then, suddenly, she bethought her of the kind old monk who had wedded her to Romeo; and leaving the house with the utmost secrecy, she made her way to the cell of Friar Laurence, to whom she poured forth her tale of woe, and besought him to counsel her in this terrible dilemma.

It happened that the old Friar had studied the properties of many valuable drugs; and presently he declared that he could provide Juliet with a certain potion which, if she drank it just before the

approaching wedding festivities began, would cause her to fall into a trance, so that her friends, thinking her to be dead, would place her in the family vault, from whence, on waking after forty-two hours had elapsed, she could be rescued by Romeo, and secretly conveyed to Mantua, where they could dwell happily together.

The Friar then asked the maiden if she had the courage to go through this ordeal; and Juliet, over-joyed at the thought of being thus preserved for

her beloved Romeo, answered eagerly:

"Give me, give me! O tell not me of fear!
Love, give me strength! and strength shall help
afford!"

So the old Friar gave her a phial containing the potion, and promised to send messengers to Romeo, that he might come secretly at night to the vault to rescue her on her awakening; and Juliet departed

to her home much comforted.

She now no longer refused to wed Count Paris; and when the bridal day arrived, she moved quite calmly amongst the throng of merry guests. But she had not forgotten the old Friar's potion; and in spite of the horror she felt at the thought of awakening in the gloomy family vault, in which her cousin Tybalt was already lying, she had bravely conquered her fears, and secretly swallowed the contents of the phial with these words:

"Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! I drink to thee!"

Her parents and their guests were therefore horrorstruck when, soon after the festivities had begun, the lovely Juliet fell to the ground, apparently dead; and the revels ended in the greatest confusion and dismay.

Lord and Lady Capulet were overcome with grief at what they supposed to be the sudden death of their fair young daughter; and with heart-rending tears and cries of woe, the still, cold form of Juliet

was laid to rest on a bier in the family vault.

Friar Laurence, after waiting to hear how his plot had succeeded, despatched a messenger to Mantua to inform Romeo of all that had happened, and to bid him come secretly to rescue his bride on her awakening; but, unhappily, before the good father's messenger arrived in Mantua, Romeo had already heard from another source the terrible news of Juliet's supposed death.

Thus knowing nothing of the old monk's plan, and believing his beloved one to be dead, Romeo was distracted with grief; but, determined to at least look once more upon the sweet face of Juliet, even though in death, he instantly mounted a horse, and

galloped at a furious pace to Verona.

He reached the city at midnight of the second day since Juliet had been reported dead; and making his way at once to the churchyard, he secured a torch and mattock, and began fiercely to break open the tomb of the Capulets. He was just about to enter the vault when he was interrupted by a newcomerwho cried to him sternly:

"Stop thy unhallowed toil, vile Montague!"

These words were spoken by Count Paris, who had also come to weep beside the remains of his lost bride; and on seeing Romeo there before him, he believed him to have come for some evil purpose.

Romeo was now half frantic with his grief; and refusing to be delayed in his quest, he drew his sword upon Paris. The two fought furiously in the dark, until at last Paris fell mortally wounded; and when Romeo took up the torch to look upon the face of his fallen antagonist, and recognised the features of Paris, his sorrow was increased, and he said:

"O, give me thy hand, One writ with me in sour misfortune's book! I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave!" He therefore lifted the dead youth tenderly, and laid him within the vault, that he might at least share the resting-place of the maiden he had loved; and then, placing the torch against the wall, he knelt, overwhelmed with despair, beside the bier of Juliet.

So fair and lovely did she still appear that at first he could scarcely believe her to be dead; but when he felt her still, cold form, he could doubt it no longer. He had already determined that he could not bear to live on without Juliet; and with this object he had broken his journey once in order to procure from an apothecary some deadly poison which would act instantaneously. He now bent down to bid his beloved one farewell, and to kiss her cold lips for the last time; and then, drawing forth the phial, he swallowed the poison, saying:

"Here's to my love! Thus with a kiss I die!"

The poison took effect immediately; and with a sigh, Romeo fell dead beside the bier of his bride.

It happened that this was the hour at which Juliet was to awaken from her trance; and Friar Laurence therefore now appeared at the opening of the vault, fearing that his messenger had been delayed, since he had seen nothing yet of the banished Montague; and when he entered the cell and beheld the dead bodies of Paris and Romeo, he guessed at the terrible catastrophe that had occurred, and uttered loud cries of woe.

At this moment, Juliet awakened from her deathlike sleep, and looked around her in wondering horror; and the old Friar besought her earnestly to leave the vault.

But Juliet's eyes had already fallen upon the dead body of her beloved Romeo, and from the empty phial in his hand, she at once gathered that he had poisoned himself upon believing her to be dead; and in an agony of grief, she came down from her bier to clasp her lover's limp form in her arms, whilst the Friar fled in alarm at the sound of approaching steps, for the disturbance at the tomb had by this time attracted the notice of the watch, who were now hastily bringing both Capulets and Montagues

to the churchyard.

Juliet also heard the approaching sounds, and knew she must act quickly; for she was determined to live no longer, since her lover was dead. As she clasped Romeo in her arms, she kissed him passionately, hoping to imbibe some of the poison from his silent lips; but finding this unavailing, she drew forth the dagger which he wore, and with it stabbed herself to the heart with these last words:

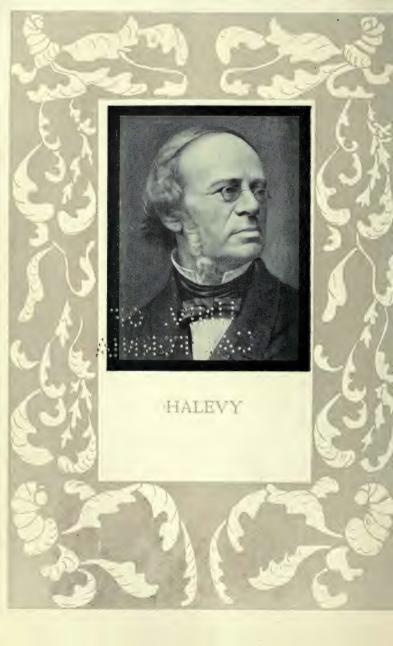
O, happy dagger!
This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die!"

The kinsfolk of the two unfortunate lovers now rushed into the vault, accompanied by Friar Laurence, who had returned to relate the sad story; and as the bereaved parents wept together over the dead bodies of their beloved children, and understood that their tragic fate had entirely arisen from the old selfish family feud, they humbly joined hands in token of mutual forgiveness and renewed friendship.

A statue of the purest gold was raised to the memory of Juliet by the Capulet family, whilst the same honour was vouchsafed to Romeo by the sorrowing Montagues; and all who gazed upon these monuments of affection shed tears of sympathy for

the hapless fate of the faithful lovers:

[&]quot;For never was a story of more woe Than this of Juliet and her Romeo! 23



THE JEWESS

(La Juive)

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Monseigneur de Brogni, Chief Magistrate of Rome, issued an Edict which decreed that all Jews were to be banished from the sacred city; and the persecuted people, knowing too well that delay meant torture and death, were compelled to submit to their enforced exodus, and to seek refuge in other lands.

Before all had departed, however, the Neapolitans, who were at that time waging war with the Roman Government, laid siege to the city, and having forced an entry, commenced ruthlessly to pillage and burn. During the absence of Monseigneur de Brogni, his splendid palace was sacked, and set ablaze; and when his arduous duties at length permitted the Chief Magistrate to return, he found his home destroyed, and was informed, to his horror, that his beloved wife and infant daughter had been left to perish in the flames.

But this was not in reality the truth, since, though the mother had indeed been burned, the babe had been rescued by a Jew, named Eleazar, who, having thus saved the child by a sudden impulse, immediately carried her away with him to share his own fortunes, rather than restore her to the hated enemy of his race.

De Brogni, frantic at the loss of his beloved ones, sought solace by joining the Church; and having attained to the rank of a Cardinal, he quickly rose

to great eminence and power in the service of Sigis-

mund, Emperor of the West.

Meanwhile, Eleazar, the Jew, had journeyed with many of his brethren to the city of Constance, then under the sway of the Pope; and, settling here, he engaged in the occupation of a dealer in gems, and by his industry soon became very wealthy. The little girl he had rescued was given the name of Rachel, and brought up as his own daughter, and in his own religion.

As time went on, Rachel grew up to be a very beautiful maiden; and as she had been always taught to regard Eleazar as her father, she rendered him due reverence and obedience as such, and proved herself to be a loving and devoted daughter. So the years passed peacefully enough for Eleazar and Rachel; but at last a change came, and terrible trouble

fell upon them.

One day, in the year 1414, the city of Constance put on its gayest appearance, and the people prepared to celebrate a solemn festival in honour of recent brilliant victories gained by their young Prince, Leopold, over certain hated enemies, and as the Emperor Sigismund was to make a triumphal entry into the city during the day, all work was suspended, and the citizens prepared to receive their

ruler with loyal rejoicings.

A solemn thanksgiving service was first held in the chief church of the city, which was situated in a great square, at one end of which was the jewel shop and dwelling of Eleazar the Jew; and presently, noticing signs of work going on within the Hebrew's abode, contrary to the decree gone forth that the day was to be observed as a sacred festival, the people in the crowded square gathered in angry groups before the gem shop, and indignantly shouted commands for the work to be stopped instantly.

Eleazar, having scorned to recognise the Christian Festival as applying to himself, had decided to carry on his work as usual; and now, hearing the menacing cries of the outraged populace, he appeared fearlessly at the door of his shop, accompanied by his daughter, and a handsome young man, whom he had recently taken into his service as an artist,

though a complete stranger to him.

This stranger was in reality none other than the young Prince Leopold, who, having on a former visit to the city seen the jeweller's lovely daughter, had straightway fallen in love with her; and knowing that he would never be permitted to wed with a Jewess, he had resorted to a disguise in order to satisfy the longings of his heart, and enjoy intercourse with the object of his affections. For this purpose, he had left the Court a few weeks before the Emperor's entry into Constance, giving out that he would join the royal party when the day of rejoicing arrived, since great honours were to be showered upon him on that occasion; and then. disguising himself in the humble dress of an artist. he journeyed to Constance, and introduced himself as a Jew, named Samuel, to Eleazar, who willingly took him into his service, since he had great natural abilities. Here he quickly won the affections of Rachel; but, still remembering that he could never marry the beautiful Jewess, he persuaded her to keep their love for awhile from the knowledge of Eleazar, as he could not bear the thought of parting from her so soon.

As the three now appeared at the shop door, the indignant mob dragged them roughly outside, declaring that they deserved to die by torture for their sacrilege of a solemn Festival Day; and, in spite of Rachel's piteous plea for mercy, she and her father would have been quickly borne away to their death, had not an interruption occurred by the entry of the Cardinal de Brogni, who was at the time passing on his way to join the Emperor. Seeing that a disturbance was taking place, De Brogni stopped to inquire the reason for it; and this being explained to him, he gave orders for the persecuted pair to

be released, recognising Eleazar as one of the prominent Hebrews he had known in Rome, although quite unconscious that the fair Rachel was in reality his own daughter, whose loss he had never ceased to mourn. Compelled to obey the command of the powerful Cardinal, the crowd drew back sullenly; and Eleazar and Rachel returned in safety to their home.

That evening, being the Jewish Feast of the Passover, a number of Hebrews met together to celebrate the solemn service at the house of Eleazar, who was a leader amongst his brethren of the faith; and amongst the company was the disguised Prince Leopold, who, though pretending to join in the ceremony, yet did not commit himself, for when the consecrated bread was handed to him, he surreptitiously flung it aside when he thought himself unobserved.

As the ceremony came to an end, a loud clamour was heard at the entrance, and upon the door being opened, to the astonishment of all, guards and attendants in the royal livery were seen without, escorting a richly-dressed lady, who entered the house alone, and announced herself to be the Princess Eudossia, niece of the Emperor. As she entered, Leopold quickly retired into the background, and kept himself concealed from view; for he was affianced to this same fair princess, and knew that ruin awaited him should he be discovered by her in the Jewish household.

The Princess, however, addressed herself to Eleazar, stating that she had come to purchase from him a handsome jewelled chain, which she wished to present to her betrothed, Prince Leopold, when he appeared at her uncle's Court on the morrow; and having chosen the most magnificent ornament of the kind which Eleazar possessed, she bade him bring it to the Palace next day, and then withdrew.

The Jewish brethren having also by this time all departed, Leopold and Rachel found themselves

alone: and the beautiful Jewess, observing her lover's pale face and agitated looks, entreated him to tell her the reason of this. Then the young Prince, having been awakened by Eudossia's visit to a sense of the wrong he was doing Rachel by thus seeking to win her love by deception, and filled with remorse, confessed to the Jewish maiden that he was a Christian. though still not revealing his true rank; and Rachel, overcome with grief at this revelation, reproached him bitterly for having thus led her into the crime of having loved and sacrificed her honour to a Christian. But when her father, hearing their voices, suddenly entered the room, and hearing of the stranger's deception, was about to stab him in his wrath, her mood instantly changed; and, flinging herself upon her knees between them, she implored Eleazar to have pity on them both, and to permit them to marry.

"My father! Be not angry, but grant my wish!" she cried passionately, "for I love Samuel, and he is

all the world to me!"

Eleazar, who loved his adopted daughter with great tenderness, gently raised her from the ground, and in tones from which the anger had all vanished, he said that he would consent to the marriage, since her happiness depended upon it. But Leopold, knowing that he, a royal prince, could never enter into such a marriage, now felt himself compelled to repudiate the bride offered to him, madly though he still loved and longed to possess her; and, declaring cruelly that he could never wed with a Jewess, he rushed hastily from the house, despising himself for his own base conduct, and followed by the furious curses of Eleazar.

Next day, the Jew and his daughter made their way to the royal Court, taking with them the splendid jewelled chain which the Princess Eudossia had purchased the evening before; and upon arriving at the Palace, they were at once ushered into the presence chamber. Here the Court was assembled

with great magnificence, and Prince Leopold, seated on a throne beside his betrothed, was receiving the congratulations and praises of the courtiers upon his

success in the recent war.

When Rachel beheld the young Prince, in spite of his resplendent attire, she at once recognised him as her false lover, Samuel; and as the Princess Eudossia was about to present her gift, determined to be revenged for her cruel treatment, she sprang forward, and, snatching the chain away, passionately denounced Leopold before the whole company, declaring that he had committed the sacrilegious crime of having betrayed a Jewess.

"I, Rachel, am the maiden he has sacrificed to his unlawful passion!" she added, in a voice that trembled with emotion. "And, since I, too, have shared in his guilt, I am prepared to suffer for my

sin!"

Upon hearing Rachel's denunciation a wave of horror swept over the whole assemblage, for the deed of which she accused the young Prince was regarded at that time as a terrible crime, and was punishable by death; and since Leopold did not attempt to deny the accusation, but bent his head in acknowledgment of guilt, they knew that he had indeed committed this act of sacrilege against his religion.

The Cardinal de Brogni, who was also present, seeing that this was so, now rose in righteous indignation at this outrage which had been offered to the Christian Church, and declared that, in accordance with the existing law, Leopold and Rachel must both suffer death for their crime, and that Eleazar should also share their fate as an accomplice; and then, followed by the curses of the whole Court, the condemned three were led away to prison.

The Princess Eudossia was overwhelmed with grief at this terrible conclusion to all her dearest hopes; but, in spite of Leopold's faithlessness, she still passionately loved him, and determined to make an

effort to save him from death.

Having obtained permission to visit Rachel in prison, she repaired to the fortress without delay, and when the young Jewess was brought before her, she besought her to save Leopold's life by declaring to the judges that he was not guilty of the crime

of which she had accused him.

Rachel, however, at first indignantly refused to help one who had so basely betrayed and repudiated her; but when Eudossia fell on her knees, and passionately pleaded with her again and again to save the man they both loved, she relented, unable to struggle longer against the natural promptings of her own heart, in which her false lover's image was for ever enshrined. She therefore promised Eudossia to obey her wish; and when brought before the judges a short time later, she declared to them that Leopold was not guilty of the crime she had attributed to him. The Cardinal de Brogni, rejoicing at this news, now declared Leopold to be innocent, and gave orders for his instant release: but Eleazar and Rachel, being now accused of having fabricated the whole story to entrap the royal Prince. were condemned for such high treason to the terrible death of being flung into a cauldron of boiling

The Cardinal, however, feeling pity for the dreadful fate about to fall upon the lovely Jewish maiden, gave Eleazar the opportunity of saving his daughter by abjuring his faith and becoming a Christian, but this suggestion the staunch Jew scornfully repudiated, declaring that he preferred to die in his own faith rather than live to join the ranks of the Christians, whom he hated. Then, having suddenly bethought him of a means of revenging himself upon the Cardinal for thus condemning him to so terrible a death, he related to him the story of how his infant daughter had been rescued from the fire years ago, saying that her preserver was a friend of his own, and that she was still living; and the Cardinal, who had never ceased to mourn for his lost child, im-

plored him to say where the maiden was to be found, that he might cherish her once again.

But Eleazar refused to reveal the secret, having determined not to give De Brogni the information until Rachel was no more, that he might thus bring everlasting grief upon him for having condemned his own child to such an agonising death; and though the Cardinal even humbled himself by kneeling in supplication before the Jew he despised, the longing of his heart remained unsatisfied.

However, when the day of execution arrived, and Rachel and himself were brought out to meet their fate, and were left together for a few moments near the scaffold from which they were to be flung into the boiling oil, the old Jew's resolution broke down, and, feeling horror at the thought of sacrificing the beautiful maiden he had loved as his own daughter, to satisfy his private vengeance, he besought her with all his heart to become a Christian, since by that means she could save herself from the awful death that awaited her.

But Rachel declared nobly that she would never forsake the faith in which she had been brought up, and had learned to love; and thus firmly resolved to wear the martyr's crown, she heroically sprang upon the scaffold, and with a cry of exultation, leapt into the seething cauldron.

Eleazar's moment of revenge had now arrived, although he had sought to avert it; and as his beloved Rachel vanished from sight, he turned to De Brogni, and cried in a frenzied voice in which triumph and anguish struggled for the mastery, "Behold, your daughter, proud Cardinal, now lost to you for ever!"

DIE KÖNIGSKINDER

(The Kingly Children)

In the midst of the dense Hella Woods, at the back of which towered the great mountain known as the Hellagebirge, a small clearing had been made in one of the sunny glades; and here, many miles away from human habitation, a mysterious old witch had made her abode. A rough, tumble-down hut served her for shelter, winter and summer alike; and for companion she had a little maiden whom she had kidnapped when but a tiny toddler, and whom she had brought up to look upon her as her grandmother, to mind her geese for her and to assist in the brewing of her magic potions.

The little goose-girl, since babyhood, had never beheld any other human being, and was never permitted to wander beyond sight of the hut; but she knew that other people existed, since she had heard the old dame speak of the folk she had seen in her own journeyings to and fro, and whom she often

cursed when muttering her evil spells.

In vain did the captured child ask for news of the bright world beyond the forest depths, and express her longings for beautiful things, for fair companions, and for the love and joy that her youth demanded; for, in reply, she only gained cruel beatings and harder tasks than ever, and she learned to hide her longings and to find pleasure in her secret thoughts.

When she was good and obedient, she was set to mind the geese and prevent them from straying

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far into the woodland depths; and this was a task she loved, for then she could sit outside in the sunshine, or gaze at the reflection of her own pretty face in the sparkling streamlet, and even deck herself with flowers when the old witch was not looking.

The geese all loved her, since she was gentle with them and regarded them as her friends, as well as the other birds and timid wild creatures that dwelt in the woods: and one fair dove that nested in a neighbouring linden-tree, she loved above them all. for its soft cooing often brought her comfort when she was sad at heart.

One sunny day, the little goose-girl lay stretched on a hillock beneath the linden-tree, whilst the geese snapped and plucked at the grass around her, or splashed in the pond close by; and as she lay there, she pulled at the daisies and hummed softly to herself, whilst her feathered friend, the gentle dove, cooed softly on a branch above.

Though still clad in a short, ragged gown, she was now in the first flush of fair young maidenhood, and possessed marvellous beauty, with the natural grace and noble bearing of a Princess; and in spite of the red kerchief which so tightly swathed her head, a few stray golden locks escaped to betray the hidden

wealth of her woman's crowning glory.

She lay thus sweetly day-dreaming in full sight of the hut, on the roof of which hopped a tame raven cawing to a big yellow tom-cat on the ground below: but, presently, she was interrupted by the old witch, who popped her head out of the window and began to scold the girl for letting the geese stray too far.

The goose-girl sprang up and collected the geese together once more; and then, hearing the witch still calling to her, she entered the little garden. where she stopped again to gaze at a lovely goldenyellow lily-bud growing there, sighing because it refused to open to the light of day.

The old dame, however, soon dragged her away with a cuff, and, putting a kettle into her hands,

bade her draw water from the trough near by; and when the girl stooped again to smile at her fair reflection in the water, she scolded her more than ever,

and set her to knead a magic cake.

The goose-girl made the cake, kneading into it various strange powders and herbs given her for the purpose by the witch; and when it was done, she held it high above her head, declaring that he who ate of it should see his sweetheart quickly. The old witch, however, snatched it from her and declared instead that it would bring death to those who ate of it.

The girl, full of horror, ran off to rest beneath the linden-tree and seek comfort from her pet dove; and presently, the old witch departed into the forest depths beyond, to gather simples and loathsome things for her potions, first telling the young captive that it was useless for her to try to wander away, since she had cast a spell over the bushes and briars, and that they would thus hold her back.

As soon as the dame had departed, the little goose-girl's spirits rose at once, so that she began to sing and dance in the sunshine; and then, snatching up a wreath of wild-flowers she had made earlier in the day and hidden in a bush, she set it on her head, and ran to gaze at her reflection in the water

trough.

The charming picture she saw there delighted her, and she called to the geese to come and admire her also; but whilst she laughed at their quacking and rejoiced in her own fair looks, she was suddenly addressed by a stranger, and, turning in haste, found herself face to face with a handsome youth, who, though clad in garments torn and travel-stained, yet had the proud and kingly air of one of royal birth.

Though at first terrified, the goose-girl gazed in amazement at the stranger, her fear quickly vanishing in wonder, admiration, and delight; and when the youth laughed at her surprise and begged her

to give him greeting, she asked in awestruck tones:-

" Are you a man?"

The stranger laughingly assured her that he was, keeping his own eyes fixed upon her face, for, though he had beheld many fair maidens before, he had never yet been confronted with one of such dazzling

loveliness as this ragged child.

He told her that he was a king's son, but that, dissatisfied with the emptiness of his life, he had wandered forth from his royal home to seek adventures in the wide world and to gain renown alone and unaided, but that his sword had gained him little glory yet, and that his wanderings had reduced him to the point of beggary; and then he asked her if he might quench his thirst at the trough, begging her also to drink with him.

The goose-girl gladly agreed to his request; and afterwards she led him to her favourite nook beneath the linden-tree, where the pair sat together and gazed into each other's eyes, still entranced by their

mutual beauty.

The King's Son could scarce believe his companion to be aught but a fairy, so fresh and fair were her looks; and his eyes grew more and more tender as, in answer to her wondering questions, he told her the uses of his flashing sword, of his father's kingship, of his own yearnings and dissatisfaction, and of his wanderings and adventures, in which he had learned to brave dangers, to despise wounds, and to take a proud delight in freedom and the joy of 'iving.

The little goose-girl listened, enthralled and spellbound, to his every word; and when, at the end of his recital, the King's Son asked her if she had ever heard of anyone so foolish before, she put her hands in his and said earnestly:—" Nay; with thee

I'd go, for thou hast grown so dear to me!"

For answer, the King's Son clasped the maiden in his arms in a tender embrace, telling her that she should indeed wander forth with him, since she was his love and he was hers; and after a long passionate kiss, the lovers remained silent for a while, too happy for words and lost to their surroundings.

Suddenly, however, a gust of wind blew off the goose-girl's wreath; and springing up in dismay, she ran after it. But the King's Son picked it up first, and thrusting it into the bosom of his tunic, declared he should keep it as a love token; and though his companion wept and entreated him to restore it to her, since it was precious in her sight as the symbol of her maidenhood, he refused to give

it up.

Then, seeing that she still grieved for it, the King's Son unfastened a small bundle he had with him, and drawing from it a golden crown, he made as though he would place it upon her head in place of the one she had lost. But the goose-girl was afraid, and refused to allow him to place the crown on her head, declaring that she liked her own pretty flower wreath better, since she cared nothing for gold and jewels, but only wanted love and peacefulness; and the King's Son flung the golden crown into the grass, and putting his arms around the maiden, offered her his love once more and the protection of his good sword, if she would go forth with him.

The goose-girl said that his love was the only thing she valued, and that she would now gladly go with him; and, hand in hand, the happy pair ran to the edge of the wood. There, another strong gust of wind nearly took their breath away, and the straying geese came flocking around the goose-girl, who now stood stock-still and terrified, as she remembered the witch's parting words; and when the King's Son impatiently asked her what was wrong, she cried out wildly that she dared not leave the place, since a magic spell had been cast over the bushes and that

they were holding her back.

The King's Son, not understanding her terror, but thinking that she cared more for her geese than for his love, was offended and declared that he would leave her if this was the case; and when the goose-girl, once more failing to free herself from the spell of magic she felt was cast around her, and fearful of the consequences of her disobedience to the witch, sank sobbing to the ground, the royal youth, beside himself with wrath and disappointment, poured forth angry reproaches upon the poor girl, declaring that a beggar-maid such as she was not fit to mate with kings, and that she would never behold him again unless a miracle should happen—until a star of light should fall from the heavens above into the opened heart of her closed lily-bud.

With these words the King's Son rushed away into the depths of the forest, and was quickly lost to sight; and the goose-girl, overcome with despair, flung herself face downwards on the grass, weeping and wailing because she had not been born a kingly child and the equal of her royal lover, whom she believed would not then have deserted her, forgetting that, if she had but conquered her fears, she would

not have lost him.

She was quickly roused from her grief, however, by hearing the approaching steps of the witch; and hastily picking up the golden crown which still lay in the grass beside her, she slipped it over the head of her favourite goose and drove the bird behind a neighbouring bush just as the old dame appeared.

The witch, nevertheless, quickly guessed that a stranger had been with the girl, whom she forced to tell her the whole story of the visit of the King's Son; and then, hearing approaching sounds of music played upon a fiddle, together with men's voices, she cuffed the weeping maiden and bundled her into the hut, slamming the door just as three more strangers issued forth from the wood.

These were a fiddler, a woodcutter, and a broommaker, who had all come thither to consult the witch, having been sent with an important message to her from the councillors and inhabitants of the town of Hellabrunn; but the two latter were a couple of cowards—though they had boasted of their great courage before setting out—and now that they had at last reached their goal, they trembled with fright, and would gladly have returned without delivering their message, in spite of the reward they had been promised.

The fiddler, however, was a seer, or wise man, who, having a brave and pure heart, had no fear of evil influences; and boldly marching up to the hut, he knocked long and loudly at the door, which was instantly opened by the witch, who angrily bade the three strangers begone if they valued their

lives.

The woodcutter and the broom-maker shivered in their shoes on hearing these words, being mortally afraid of the dealer in magic; but the fiddler, after merrily paying a number of flowery compliments to the old hag, whose sour visage he pretended to admire, bade the quaking pair state their business.

In fear and trembling, the two cowards began to mumble out their message; but the fiddler soon pushed them to one side and told the tale himself. He stated that the good people of Hellabrunn had recently lost their beloved old King, who had died without leaving an heir to succeed him; and since they longed for a new and glorious ruler to place upon the empty throne, the present ambassadors had been sent to the wise witch-woman to ask if, by means of her magic, she could tell them where they could quickest find the ruler they sought, who might be either a prince or a princess, but who must be of royal birth and of the kingly kind.

Even as he spoke, the fiddler caught sight of the little goose-girl peeping out of the window; and recognising at once by her noble air that she must be of royal birth, he was filled with joy, and knew

that here he should find a queen, at least.

He said nothing of what he had seen, however, but made a sign to the maiden to keep in hiding for the moment; and in reply to the petition, the old witch, cager to be rid of her unwelcome visitor, and remembering that the King's Son had departed towards the town, told the ambassadors that they might ring the joy-bells in Hellabrunn next day, since he who was of royal birth and worthy to be their King, even though he might come without pomp and poorly clad, would be the first person to enter their town at noon on the morrow—adding, moreover, that the townsfolk were all fools, and through their own stupidity would as likely as not lose the good King they sought; with which parting shaft, she retired into the hut and slammed the door once more.

The broom-maker and the woodcutter chuckled as they realised that by bringing this good news, they would certainly gain the fine reward which had been offered by the councillors and greybeards of the town; and the fiddler, disgusted with their mercenary natures, drove them away from the place, and then returned alone to the hut, determined to free the captive maiden, whom he felt sure was of royal birth.

He soon forced the old witch to bring forth the goose-girl; and when he had heard the old dame's story of how she had come by the child, he proved by a corresponding story he now remembered that the maiden was indeed of royal birth, and declared that she should come away with him to reign as Queen in Hellabrunn, since she was worthy to be the bride of the King's Son, who was to enter the town as its ruler on the morrow.

Full of joy on thus learning that she was a kingly child, the goose-girl quickly fetched out the hidden golden crown she had refused to wear that morning; and shaking down her long golden hair, which fell like a dazzling mantle around her, she placed the

crown upon her head.

Twilight had now fallen; and the goose-girl, longing for a sign that she should indeed behold her royal lover once again, fell upon her knees and prayed for a token to be given to her; and, to her joy, a star of light fell from the heavens above into

the heart of her beautiful golden lily-bud, which opened at that moment to receive it.

And now, full of exultation as she remembered the words of the King's Son, the goose-girl, no longer afraid of the old witch, whose power over her was thus broken, ran quickly out into the dark woodlands, closely followed by the happy fiddler, who sang merrily to the cheerful music of his fiddle; and the angry old hag was left alone, deprived of her captive, to curse and grind her teeth with rage.

Early next morning the worthy folk of Hellabrunn turned out in good time, in order to decorate their town and make preparations to receive their promised King; for the woodcutter and the broom-maker had returned the evening before with the news that the first person to enter the city gates at noon next day would be the royal ruler they desired—and, inflated with their own importance and eager to gain additional praises from the people, they gave out that the new ruler would come in a golden car, be clad in dazzling garments, and be surrounded by a splendour of great glory.

The consequence was that when the eventful day dawned, the expected royal stranger was already in their midst, unknown to anyone; for the King's Son, footsore, ragged, and travel-stained, had entered the town the evening before, passing through the gates unnoticed, being merely regarded by the gate-keepers

as a poor beggar.

But the royal youth, though faint with hunger and weariness, was too proud to beg; and finding a sheltered spot behind the swine-pen adjoining an inn which stood at the entrance to the town, he passed

the night there.

He slept until late in the morning, and then arose wearily; and knowing nothing of the excitement that prevailed in the town, he wandered into the yard of the inn. Here he was greeted by the innkeeper's daughter, who had seated herself thus close to the

town gates in the hope of being the first person to welcome the expected King; and being possessed of handsome looks, he greatly attracted the coquettish maiden who was eager for a new sweetheart, and

always ready for a flirtation.

She ordered a maid to bring out for the hungry stranger some food, which, however, was so coarse that the King's Son could not touch it, though he gladly drank a little of the sour wine that accompanied it; and then the innkeeper's daughter drew him aside and made him sit down with her upon a bench, brazenly inviting him to kiss her. But the King's Son refused to do so; and when he presently drew forth the little goose-girl's wreath of flowers from the bosom of his tunic, and pressed it tenderly to his lips instead, the bold hussy, furious at the rebuff, boxed his ears and rushed away into the inn in a pet.

The King's Son, heedless of the girl's tantrum, put the wreath back into his tunic, longing for the time when he should see his beloved one again; for he had long since regretted his hasty words to her of the day before, and knew now that she was his love for

ever.

To such straits had he been reduced by his wanderings, however, that, since he was too proud to beg for food, he determined to work for it; so when the innkeeper presently appeared in the courtyard, he asked him for employment, and gladly accepted the lowly work of a swineherd which was all the

busy landlord had to offer him.

By this time a bustling crowd of townsfolk in gala attire had gathered together in the square before the closed city gates; and the worthy councillors and elders scated themselves on a decorated daïs, ready to receive the expected King, all chattering at once, every now and again stopping to listen eagerly to the exaggerated tales of their previous day's adventures told by the woodcutter and the broom-maker. The latter had brought his

fifteen children with him, one of whom, a pretty little flaxen-haired girl of ten summers, immediately noticed the King's Son, and hastened to make friends with him; and the royal youth gladly played with

the fair child, grateful for her welcome.

The King's Son next inquired the reason for the gay assemblage; and on learning that the people were actually in need of a king, and were, in fact, even now expecting a stranger of royal birth presently to appear in their midst, whom they were prepared to acclaim as their ruler, he for the moment, rejoiced, feeling that he, himself, must be the King prophesied for them. Too soon, however, he realised that they were not worthy to be the people of a great king, for when he described to them the kingly qualities of true nobility they should hope to find in their coming ruler, they all laughed him to scorn, declaring that they only looked for one who would do as their smug councillors bade him.

Then, seeing also that they expected their new King to appear before them in dazzling garments, he asked them if, supposing the stranger came before them clad in ragged or travel-stained apparel instead, they would still have sufficient wisdom and discernment to recognise him as of royal birth by his kingly bearing and nobility of heart; and when, in reply, they ridiculed the idea that royalty could be recognised by any other means than by obviously royal garments, the King's Son felt such contempt for their small-minded vulgar conception of kingship that his dark eyes flashed with scorn, and he passionately denounced them as unworthy to be the subjects of a real king.

A hubbub quickly ensued, since the dull, self-satistownsfolk were offended at hearing such fied home-truths from a ragged stranger; and when the innkeeper's daughter now came forward and maliciously declared that she had supplied food to him for which he had not paid, the people accused him of being a thief, and rushed upon him with sticks, declaring that they would beat the life out of him.

At this moment, however, their hands were stayed by the clanging of the noon-tide bells, which suddenly rang out; and all the people drew back as the town gates were flung wide open, since this was the hour at which they expected the royal stranger to appear.

To their amazement and disappointment, however, no gorgeous king stood before them; but through the open gates there passed the fair young goosegirl, still clad in her short ragged gown, but with a golden crown upon her long, flowing locks. She was attended by her flock of faithful geese, and closely followed by the fiddler; and all the people stared in astonishment as she addressed the King's Son, holding out her arms to him and telling him that she was now worthy to wear his crown, since her love had cast out all her fears, and she would evermore be true and faithful to him.

The King's Son, full of joy, rushed forward to clasp the beautiful maiden in his arms, pouring forth sweet tender words of love and devotion, and address-

ing her as his queen.

On hearing the poorly-clad strangers thus addressing each other as king and queen, the crowd burst forth into peals of derisive laughter; and though the fiddler eagerly declared that the loving pair were indeed of royal birth and entreated his neighbours to receive them as their rulers, bidding all to observe that they possessed the noble bearing that only belonged to kingly children, the stupid people of Hellabrunn would have none of them, but drove out the King's Son and the beautiful royal goose-girl with contumely from their town, and closed the gates upon them.

Only one amongst them all believed the words of the fiddler; and this was the broom-maker's little flaxen-haired daughter, who flung herself weeping upon the ground, crying out aloud that they had driven forth from their midst the noble and gracious kingly children who had been sent to rule over them.

But no one paid any heed to the weeping little child, for all were too busy hustling the poor fiddler off to the town gaol, where they kept him for many months as a captive, because he had asked them to accept a couple of ragged strangers as their rulers.

Not satisfied with this, they also sent a party of stalwart men to seize the old witch, since they considered that she had deceived them, whereas, for once in her life, the old dame had told them the truth; and they burnt her at the stake as a daler in magic which was of no avail.

When at last the fiddler was released from prison, it was winter-time; and he would certainly have starved had not the broom-maker's little flaxenhaired daughter brought him food, and helped him to reach the witch's deserted hut, for he was still lame from the broken leg he had received when dragged off to prison. He gladly made friends with the little maid, and was filled with great gladness when she told him that she had persuaded all the other children in the town into the belief that the luckless pair of strangers whom their parents and elders had so stupidly driven from their midst were indeed the expected King and Queen whose coming had been prophesied—the kingly children who were worthy to be their rulers; and one day, all the children came trooping out through the snow-clad woods to entreat him to go forth with them to seek the royal lovers whom they believed were still wandering in the forest.

At first the fiddler, wishing to spare them from exposure to the cold, asked them to wait until the spring should appear; but when they told him that by that time the kingly children might have perished, he agreed to go with them and guide them in their search.

That same day, whilst they thus talked together,

the broom-maker and the woodcutter appeared with the news that the fiddler had now been forgiven by the townsfolk, who desired him to return to them, and cheer them with his merry music once more; but the fiddler indignantly refused to dwell with people who were too stupid and mean-spirited to understand the true meaning of noble kingship, and who had not the discernment to recognise a king, even though he came before them in humble garments. He turned aside, therefore, and led the children away into the woods to begin their search; and the broom-maker and the woodcutter took shelter for awhile in the hut, shutting the window and door to keep out the cold.

The Hellabrunn children were right in their belief that the royal wanderers were still in the forest; for, a little later in the day, the King's Son struggled out into the snow-clad glade, bearing in his arms the beautiful goose-girl, who was too exhausted and numbed with cold to walk another step. During the months that had passed they had found many sheltered spots in which to rest and partake of the scanty food which the woodlands had yielded to them; but now, at last, they had come to the end of all their resources and were dying for want of

food and from exposure to the cold.

Seeing that the hut was occupied, the King's Son knocked at the door, and when it was opened, entreated for some food for his companion; but the stingy pair within refused to part with anything

without payment.

The King's Son was in despair, for he had no money left; then taking the golden crown which he had always managed to preserve until now, he broke it and offered half in payment for the ancient cake which the woodcutter had found in a cupboard, and which had been left there by the old witch. The greedy woodcutter, however, demanded both the pieces of gold; and the King's Son, now thinking only of his beloved one's dire necessity, eagerly flung the entire

crown to him, receiving in return the precious stale cake.

The goose-girl revived somewhat for the moment after swallowing some of the cake, and insisted upon her companion taking some of it too; and then the pair talked happily together for awhile in their weak low voices, recalling the bright days of the autumntime when they had sat together in the sunshine and decked one another with flowers.

But the cake they had partaken of was a poisoned one, and the King's Son and the goose-girl soon felt that they were dying; and as another storm began to blow and the snowflakes quickly covered the royal lovers as they lay in each other's arms, they kissed one another tenderly for the last time, and softly

sank into the sleep of death.

And there they were found at last by the fiddler and the children of Hellabrunn, who all fell on their knees and wept for the sad fate of the royal pair who had come to a people who knew them not—a people who, in their folly and stupidity, had driven forth their promised king and queen to perish in the forest, thus shutting out from their midst the light of a great glory that might have been theirs, because they lacked discernment to recognise the fact that inward nobility of heart and mind makes for true kingship, and not the outward pomp of fine raiment and gorgeous surroundings!

Alas, short-sighted, misguided townsfolk! And,

alas, poor rejected kingly children!

PAGLIACCI

(The Mountebanks)

It was the Feast of the Assumption, and the light-hearted inhabitants of a pretty village in Calabria had turned out in full force to make the most of the last day of a successful fair that had been held in their midst. The fair ground was crowded with holiday-makers, all bent on amusement, and a brisk business was carried on at the various shows and

booths from morning till night.

A company of strolling players had been one of the chief attractions of the fair; and when during the afternoon, Canio, the master of the troupe, mounted the steps of his portable theatre, and, beating a noisy drum, invited the holiday-makers to attend the last performance to be given that evening, the announcement was hailed with great delight. The merry youths and maidens all signified their intention of witnessing the play, and then Canio, assured of a good audience, went to spend the intervening time at the village tavern, together with his friend Beppo, the Harlequin of the company.

The travelling theatre had been set up close beside a high wall that separated the fair ground from the country road; and no sooner had Canio departed, than his pretty young actress wife, Nedda, came out from the booth, and began to stroll towards this wall, as though expecting to see someone appear

above it.

At the same moment, a hunchback named Tonio, who was clown to the troupe, quickly approached

and addressed her in endearing terms; for, though distorted in mind as well as in body, the poor buffoon had yet fallen a victim to the charms of his master's wife, and had long awaited this opportunity to declare his love. But the pretty Nedda, who hated and despised the hunchback, only laughed in derision at his protestations; and when the eager Tonio, rendered reckless by his passion, attempted boldly to seize her in his arms, she angrily snatched up a whip that was lying near, and began to belabour him with it. The wretched hunchback was now obliged to beat a hasty retreat; but, full of rage at her scornful treatment of him, he determined to revenge himself upon her, and slunk off with evil in his heart.

As Nedda heaved a sigh of relief after watching Tonio vanish in the crowd, she heard her own name softly uttered in tender accents; and, seeing the form of a handsome young man appearing above the wall, she hurried forward with delight, this second intruder on her solitude being as welcome as the first had been distasteful. For the pretty young actress had already wearied of her husband, whose coarser nature, and rough, almost savage love, repelled her; and so, when Silvio, a rich young farmer in the district who had fallen in love with her at the theatre, found an opportunity to declare his passion, she had quickly returned his love, finding relief and pleasure in his gentler manners and softer moods.

The lovers met in secret every day; for Nedda, though constantly afraid of her husband's anger should he discover the intrigue, was yet daring enough to seek happiness at the risk of danger; and now Silvio had come for a last interview, knowing that the troupe were to depart on the morrow, since

this was the final day of the fair.

The rustic youth quickly scaled the wall; and, clasping his sweetheart in his arms, he besought her to fly with him that night, and leave a husband who was no better than a tyrant, and a life that was

distasteful to her. For a short time, Nedda tried to resist Silvio's pleading, begging him not to tempt her; but at length, overcome by his passionate entreaties, she yielded, and promised to meet him that night after the last performance was over at the theatre, that they might escape away together.

Whilst the lovers were thus engrossed, Tonio returned, and watched this pretty scene for a few moments unobserved; and then suddenly seeing in this incident a means of revenging himself upon Nedda for her disdainful treatment of himself, he crept softly away, and departed to the village tavern to disclose to Canio the story of his wife's faithlessness.

On hearing the hunchback's tale, Canio was overwhelmed with rage and jealousy, and instantly returned with him to the theatre; and he arrived on the scene just in time to see Silvio disappearing over the wall and waving a tender farewell to Nedda, who answered him lovingly from below, repeating

her promise to meet him after dark.

Enraged at this proof of his beautiful wife's infidelity, the injured husband ran forward to intercept the departing lover; but Silvio was already on the other side of the wall, and beyond his reach. Canio then turned furiously upon the trembling Nedda; and roughly seizing her by the arm, he demanded the name of her lover. But Nedda, though terrified by her husband's angry words and threatening aspect, boldly refused to betray the man she loved; and Canio, maddened by her refusal, impetuously drew his dagger from its sheath, declaring that he would kill her.

At this moment, Beppo appeared, having followed his friend from the tavern, fearing that something was wrong; and, hearing Canio's threat, he sprang forward at once, and snatching the weapon from his hand, begged him to calm himself and prepare for the evening's performance at the theatre, since the holiday-makers were already clamouring for admission.

After much trouble, Canio was at length persuaded to remember the duties of his profession, and to release Nedda, who quickly escaped to the theatre; and having thus pacified his friend for the time being, Beppo began to make preparations for the approaching entertainment. The hunchback, too. seeing now that he must wait a little longer before carrying out his plan of vengeance, begged his master to dress for the play, cunningly suggesting that Nedda's lover would probably attend the theatre that night, and thus give them an opportunity of attacking him; and at last, Canio, full of grief and despair (for he loved his wife passionately in his rough, savage way), was persuaded to take part in the comedy, although a tragedy was in his heart.

A lively audience of village lads and maidens now quickly filled the benches that had been placed before the open stage; and those who could not get seats, stood on the rising ground at the back, all chattering together and eager for the play to

begin.

Amongst those who managed to get a place near the front was the handsome Silvio, who, as Tonio had predicted, had not been able to resist the temptation of watching his sweetheart from afar; and when Nedda, now clad in her stage dress Columbine (which part she took in the play) presently appeared amongst the audience to collect the entrance money, he whispered in her ear a tender reminder of their meeting later on.

As it happened, the play chosen for performance that night, by a strange coincidence, proved to be a burlesque of the very incidents the actors themselves had just experienced, and the unsuspecting audience, though they little guessed it, were to be regaled with a page from real life, a repetition of the events that had occurred unobserved by them outside the theatre that afternoon-a comedy that was to end in a tragedy!

When the curtain went up Columbine (personated

by Nedda) was discovered waiting for her lover, Harlequin (played by Beppo), whom she was about to entertain to supper during the absence of her husband. Punchinello. An idiot-servant, Taddeo (played by Tonio), entered after the opening speech, carrying food for the supper; and after placing the viands on the table, he began to make a grotesque declaration of love to Columbine, causing much laughter amongst the audience. Columbine, however, scornfully rejected his addresses, and bade him begone, and Harlequin, who entered through the window at that moment, soon drove off the importunate servant, and sent him to keep watch below. Harlequin and Columbine next went through an exaggerated love-scene, the faithless wife yielding to her lover's request to fly with him that night; and then, just as they settled down to enjoy the feast together, Taddeo ran into the room again, announcing in dramatic tones to Columbine that her husband had just returned home unexpectedly, and was already vowing vengeance on her for entertaining a stranger during his absence. With a parting injunction, Harlequin very ungallantly disappeared through the window, following the example of Taddeo, who had already decamped in another direction; and just as Columbine called out a tender farewell to her departing lover, Punchinello (per sonated by Canio) dashed into the room.

Until now, the play had been a most amusing burlesque, and the audience had been kept in a state of constant laughter at the many ridiculous situations; but with the entrance of Punchinello, they quickly saw that more serious work was to follow. Now, it happened that Nedda, as Columbine, in her farewell speech to Harlequin, had unconsciously made use of the very same words she had addressed to her real lover in the afternoon; and Canio, remembering only too well the speech that had brought such despair to his heart, gave vent to his jealous rage once more, and, forgetting the words of the play.

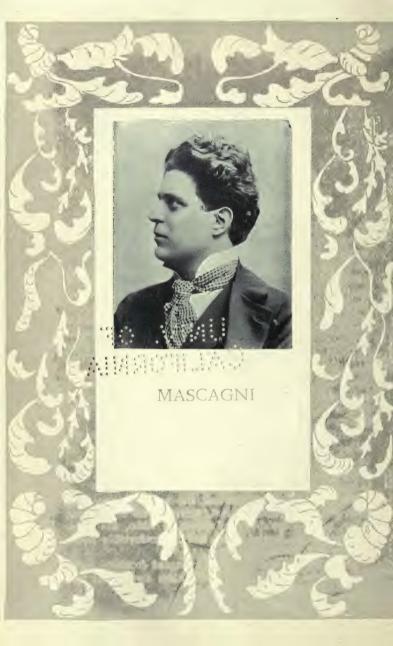
he seized his wife by the arm, and again demanded the name of her lover. Nedda, surprised and alarmed by this unrehearsed incident of the play, went on with her Columbine speeches, and for a short time Canio returned to his part of Punchinello, and the play proceeded. Columbine explained to her enraged spouse that it was only the foolish servant Taddeo who had been her guest at supper, and Taddeo, being discovered hiding in a cupboard, made a ludicrous speech, beseeching Punchinello not to doubt the fidelity of his wife, declaring in exaggerated terms that she would never deceive him. These words caused Canio's suppressed passion to break out once more, and, forgetting all but his own wrongs, he once more ordered Nedda to reveal the name of her lover, declaring passionately that he was Punchinello no longer, but the husband she had deceived.

The audience had at first been delighted at what they considered the fine acting of the injured Punchinello, frequently giving vent to enthusiastic rounds of applause; but now they began to grow restless, feeling uncomfortably that such an intensity of passion could hardly be assumed. It was in vain that Nedda endeavoured to go on with the words of the play; and, seeing that her maddened husband was in deadly earnest, she only sought to defend herself. In spite of his threats, she utterly refused to declare the name of her lover; and at last, driven to madness by her refusal, Canio, in a frenzy of jealousy, drew his dagger and plunged it into her heart.

The audience, no longer deceived, but now seeing that a real tragedy was going on before their eyes, uttered loud shrieks of dismay; and Silvio, full of horror and despair, sprang upon the stage at a bound, and, lifting his dead love in his arms, implored her in grief-stricken accents to speak to him once again. But Canio leapt upon him instantly, knowing now that the handsome young farmer was his rival and the cause of his woe; and with a second stroke of

his dagger, he laid the bereaved lover dead beside his stricken mistress.

For a few moments, the frenzied Canio stood dazed and stupefied, gazing upon his dreadful handiwork; and then, as the spectators sprang forward to seize him, he yielded himself quietly into their hands, muttering as they led him away: "The comedy is finished!"



CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

(Rustic Chivalry)

Ir was Easter morning, and the inhabitants of a certain pretty little village in the island of Sicily were wending their way towards the church to join in the customary special service of praise and thanksgiving in honour of the festival. They were lighthearted, peaceful peasants, who worked hard for their living, and so were glad to rejoice and be merry on feast days; and though shut off from the outside world, like other island folk, they had considerable pride, and jealously guarded the honour of their native village. As they approached the church this bright Easter morning, their simple hearts were filled with joy and gratitude for the life of peaceful calm allotted to them; and yet, though they knew it not, a tragedy was even now being enacted in their midst.

Turiddu, one of the handsomest youths in the village, had become a soldier, and before going off to the wars, had obtained the promise of his sweetheart, Lola, to remain faithful to him, that

they might be wed on his return.

But the pretty Lola found the waiting time long and wearisome; and, at last, tiring of an ever-absent lover, she accepted the advances of Alfio, the prosperous village carrier, who had a comfortable home to offer and loved her dearly.

So when Turiddu at length returned from his military service, he found his faithless sweetheart the wife of the happy Alfio; but though filled with disappointment and grief, he determined in his pride not to let Lola see that he cared aught for his loss. To this end, knowing that he was looked upon with favour by another fair village maiden, named Santuzza, he began to pay his addresses to her with much ardour; and he pursued his false wooing with such success that in a very short time he had not only stolen this poor girl's heart, but her honour, also.

Now, when Lola saw that Turiddu had taken a new sweetheart in her place, she was filled with unreasonable resentment; and all her old love returning with the sting of jealousy, she sought to draw him back to her side once more, regardless of her wifely vows to Alfio. Nor did she find her task a difficult one; for Turiddu's passion for her had never altered, although he had found comfort for a time in the smile of Santuzza, and he gladly accepted her invitation to resume their old sweet intercourse.

Every day the lovers met in secret, being careful to keep all their movements concealed from the unsuspecting Alfio; and for a little while they were able

to rejoice in their lawless love.

But the secret did not long remain hidden from the betrayed and deserted Santuzza, who still passionately loved Turiddu; and when she discovered that he had returned to his old love she was filled with grief and jealousy. For a while, she kept the secret to herself, hoping to persuade the man she loved to come back to her, and give up his dangerous intercourse with Lola; but when after many weeks had passed, and still Turiddu came not, she determined to go and seek him out.

Having learnt from a neighbour that her false lover had been seen lingering near the abode of Alfio on the previous evening, she made her way, full of misery, to the abode of Turiddu's mother, Lucia, a cottage situated near the church in an open square. Here she waited until Lucia came out from the cottage, ready for church; and

then, hurrying towards the good dame, she asked her where Turiddu was to be found.

Lucia replied that her son had gone a few days ago into the neighbouring town of Francoslute to setch wine, and had not yet returned; but Santuzza declared this could not be true, since he had been seen in the village only the evening before. On hearing this, Lucia was surprised and troubled; for, although she knew nothing of Turidda's secret love, his movements had been mysterious to her of late, and she had felt that all was not right with him.

Just then, Alfio, the carrier, entered the square with his team, singing a merry song as he drove by. He stopped at the cottage to ask for a cup of wine, and upon the name of Turiddu being mentioned, he told Lucia, with a sudden frown, that her son had been lurking near his own cottage that very morning, and had been seen there several other times of late. Lucia was about to say more on the subject, when Santuzza, not wishing to betray her faithless lover, made a sign to her to desist; and a few moments later Alfio went off with his team, but with a troubled look on his face, for a suspicion as to Turiddu's object in haunting his wife's abode now flashed across his mind for the first time.

When he had gone, Santuzza, unable to bear her grief in silence any longer, determined to take Lucia into her confidence; and, in despairing tones, she now poured out the whole wretched story to the dame—how Turiddu, in pique, had won her love and betrayed her, deserting her in order to return

to his former sweetheart, Lola.

Lucia listened to this sad story with grief in her heart for the sin of her son, and pity for the unhappy girl he had wronged; and when it came to an end, she folded Santuzza in her arms, and said that she would offer prayers for her comfort even now. She then went into the church, which was already filled with worshippers singing their Easter anthem; but Santuzza remained weeping by the cottage door.

Presently, she saw Turiddu enter the square, and, hurrying forward eagerly, she greeted him with reproaches, passionately imploring him to return to her love once more. But Turiddu, who had come to look for Lola on her way to church, was in no mood to hear the reproaches of Santuzza; and he declared that her pleadings were in vain to move him, for she was nothing to him, and Lola's love was all he wanted.

At this moment Lola herself came by, singing on her way to church, and seeing Santuzza and Turiddu together, a momentary wave of jealousy seized her. She began to mock at them both for choosing the public square for their love-making; and when Turiddu tried to draw her away with him, she shook herself free, and scornfully bade him stay with his beloved Santuzza. She then turned away with a careless laugh, and went into the church, and Turiddu, rendered furious at her mocking words, which had been incited by the presence of her rival, turned angrily away from Santuzza, and bade her leave him.

The wretched Santuzza, however, refused to be dismissed; and again she implored him to have pity and return to her loving heart once more. But Turiddu declared cruelly that everything was now over between them, his love for Lola being allabsorbing, and when Santuzza clung to his arm in her wild eagerness, he flung her passionately from him, and hastened into the church, heedless that she

had fallen to the ground.

Poor Santuzza lay for a few moments where she had fallen; and when she had recovered sufficiently to raise herself, she saw that Alfio the carrier had returned to the square again, and was standing close beside her. Maddened by Turiddu's cruel treatment, she now determined to be revenged upon him, and, turning eagerly to Alfio, she related to him the story of his wife's intrigue. She kept nothing back, not even Turiddu's betrayal of herself, and Alfio knew from her deep distress and passion that she spoke

the truth, which his own recently awakened sus-

picions too surely confirmed.

The injured husband listened with grief and rage in his heart, and when the story came to an end, he exclaimed vehemently that all his love for his faithless wife was now changed to hate, and that he would surely avenge himself speedily upon the betrayer of his honour.

Santuzza was terrified at the tumult of passion she had thus raised, and would gladly have recalled her words, could she have done so; but Alfio flung her detaining arm from him, and fled away to collect

his agonised thoughts.

The service at the church was now at an end; and the worshippers came pouring forth into the squarelaughing and rejoicing together, for the rest of the

day was to be spent in merriment.

Turridu and the pretty Lola came out together with happy faces, for the careless girl's jealous outburst had quickly flown; and as they passed a little inn at one side of the square, Turiddu snatched up a cup of wine from a table that stood without, and drank it off to the health of his sweetheart. Lola recklessly responded to the pledge; and then, Turiddu carried away by the delirium of the moment, began to sing a lively drinking song, in which he was heartily joined by the merry bystanders.

As the song came to an end, Alfio suddenly broke into the group; and from his pale, set face, and the look of suppressed passion in his burning eyes, it soon became plain to all that some fearful act was in contemplation. The women drew together, and began to whisper in frightened tones; but the men called out a friendly welcome to Alfio, who returned

their greeting with calmness.

But when Turiddu, still keeping up his gay tone, offered the newcomer a cup of wine, and boldly invited him to drink to their friendship, Alfio refused with the utmost scorn, and he declared in resentful tones that wine offered by Turiddu was to him but

deadly poison. On hearing these words, Lola uttered a cry of fear, knowing now that her wronged husband had discovered all; and, full of despair, she allowed herself to be led away by the trembling women, who quickly guessed that she was concerned in the quarrel, and were eager to remove her from the scene.

Turiddu also saw that his secret was known by the man he had wronged, but was not afraid to meet the consequences of his guilt; and seeing that Alfio meant to satisfy his honour by fighting, he went boldly forward and made the first challenge himself. This he did by biting the left ear of his opponent, according to the local custom of the island; and at the same time, he took all the blame of the intrigue upon himself, and begged Alfio not to deal harshly with Lola.

Alfio calmly accepted the challenge, and, leading the way to a garden near by, he bade Turiddu follow him, that they might fight there undisturbed. As Turiddu followed, he stopped at the door of his home and called for his mother, and when Lucia hurried out, alarmed at his excited tones, he begged her in case he was killed, to guard and care for poor Santuzza, whom he had so cruelly wronged. He also implored her to bless him and pray for his forgiveness; and then, with a last tender embrace, he drew his dagger, and rushed into the garden to begin the duel.

Lucia was terrified at her son's aspect, and guessed at once what had happened; and when, at that moment, Santuzza ran up, asking wildly for her lover, she folded her in her arms with a sobbing cry.

Suddenly, a loud shout of "Turiddu is slain!" came from those who had followed to watch the fight, and as the cry was taken up in the square, Lucia and Santuzza, grief-stricken, sank senseless to the ground.

Thus was rustic honour satisfied, and Alfio avenged of his wrongs; but the bright Easter morn that had dawned so joyously ended in gloom and the dark

shadow of neath !



MEYERBEER

ROBERT THE DEVIL

(Robert le Diable)

A BRILLIANT scene was taking place in the port of Palermo one day in the beginning of the eleventh century, for a large number of noble cavaliers and knights had lately arrived from various cities in Europe to take part in a grand Tournament to be held there, and all were talking about the great event as they greeted one another and quaffed wine together.

The Tournament was to be held under the auspices of the Duke of Messina, the hand of whose daughter, the beautiful Princess Isabella of Sicily, was offered as the prize of victory; and it was for this reason that so many of the proudest knights in Christendom had determined to enter the lists, for the fair

Princess was indeed a dazzling reward.

Amongst the latest arrivals was a handsome young knight, whose rich equipment and splendid train of attendants quickly attracted the attention of the assembled cavaliers, and excited their curiosity as to who he might be; for he was unknown to them, though not a stranger in Palermo. This newcomer was in reality Robert, Duke of Normandy, who had gained for himself the ill-famed title of "Robert the Devil"—a name which, though first bestowed on him from the supposition that his father had been a fiend, he had afterwards fully earned by his own recklessly wicked conduct, which had at length resulted in his expulsion from Normandy.

During his subsequent wanderings and adventures

in Europe, Robert had made the acquaintance of the lovely Princess of Sicily, for whom he had instantly conceived a true and deep passion; and Isabella, though warned by his evil reputation, had quickly returned his love, being irresistibly attracted by his handsome looks, and the glimpses of a noble nature which he exhibited when in her presence.

His wild and passionate disposition, however, quickly led him into a violent outburst of jealous rage against his beloved one's father, who did not encourage his suit, and not content with insulting the proud ruler, he also challenged all his knights to combat. This brought disaster upon him, for the Duke of Messina's angry knights were too powerful for him to overcome, and soon compelled him to

take to flight.

Robert was in despair at the result of his rash conduct, for Isabella was deeply offended, and though still secretly loving him well, seemed inclined to favour the addresses of the Duke of Granada, whose suit was constantly urged by her father. But when the Tournament and its prize for victory were shortly afterwards announced, Robert determined to seek pardon of the Princess, and enter the lists as a candidate; and to this end he now arrived in Palermo with a gorgeous retinue, displaying every mark of extravagant splendour.

Now, in all his evil pleasures and wild excesses. Robert had always been aided and encouraged by a sinister-looking knight, named Bertram, who was his constant companion, and who, though he knew it not, was in reality his fiend-father; and so, upon arriving in Palermo, this favoured friend was in close attendance upon the young Duke as usual.

Robert greeted the assembled nobles in a courtly manner; and then, observing that some Norman troubadours were also in the company, he tossed a piece of gold to one of these, and bade him sing a lay. The minstrel, whose name was Raimbaud, at once stepped forward; and little guessing that it was his royal master who stood before him, he announced to the expectant lords that he would sing to them the true story of Normandy's ill-fated young Duke known as "Robert the Devil."

He then tuned his harp, and began his lay, relating how the proud Princess Bertha of Normandy, after scornfully refusing many noble suitors, at length accepted the love of a stranger prince, who was, in truth, a fiend in disguise. He went on to describe how the son of this strange marriage was young Robert, called the Devil, because, inheriting a love of evil from his demon-father, he had constantly indulged in wicked excesses of every kind; and led away by the excitement of his theme, the minstrel portrayed the vices of Normandy's banished Duke in the glowing colours of popular dread.

Strange to say, Robert himself had never before heard the story of his supposed fiend-father; and as he listened to the minstrel's lay he became so full of rage that when it came to an end he could no longer restrain his feelings. Haughtily announcing that he himself was Robert of Normandy, he commanded his attendants to seize and hang the troubadour without delay; and instantly the wretched Raimbaud, realising what a terrible mistake he had made, fell on his knees, entreating for mercy. He declared that he had not recognised his royal master, for whom he had brought an important message; and he added that he and his betrothed, a young village maiden, had come to Palermo together for this very purpose.

On hearing this, Robert now declared that he would take the village maiden in compensation for the minstrel's life; and ordering Raimbaud's release, he sent for the girl, promising her as a prize to his cavaliers. The unhappy Raimbaud uttered a cry of woe; but the gay cavaliers quickly surrounded the pretty maiden he had indicated, squabbling fiercely as to which should obtain possession of her.

The poor girl cried aloud for mercy; but as she was helplessly dragged forward, Robert himself ran to

her aid, for he had instantly recognised her as his foster-sister, Alice, with whom he had played as a child, in Normandy. He quickly released her from the rough hands of her lawless captors, and as the cavaliers fell back, grumbling at the loss of their prey, proclaimed that the maiden was under his protection, for the sight of her sweet, innocent face had roused within him once more the better feelings of his childish days.

He then asked her how she came to be in Palermo. and Alice replied that she and her betrothed. Raimbaud, had deferred the day of their union, in order to bring a message to their royal master from his sainted mother. In answer to Robert's eager questions, she told him that Princess Bertha was now dead, and that her last message to her erring son had been that as she prayed for him on earth, so would she also

never cease to pray for him in Heaven.

Full of grief at hearing of the death of his mother, Robert told Alice that naught was left to him but despair, since he had also had another terrible trouble to bear; but on relating to her the story of his now hopeless love for Isabella, the village maiden comforted him greatly by declaring that she would seek out the Princess, and implore her to pardon him. But suddenly catching sight of the sinister knight, Bertram, she trembled violently, saying that his dark face reminded her of a picture she had once seen of the Evil One; and seeing that he was about to approach, she crept away to rejoin her released lover.

Bertram now persuaded Robert to indulge in a game of dice with their new friends; and encouraged by his evil companion to double and treble his stakes at each failure, the reckless young Duke quickly lost the whole of his fortune, even to his horses and armour.

Meanwhile, the gentle Alice had not forgotten her promise to her royal foster-brother; and on the day of the Tournament she sought an interview with the Princess of Sicily as she sat beneath her gorgeous canopy, and gave her a message from Robert, who implored pardon and humbly asked permission to contest for her hand in the lists that day. Isabella, who had never ceased to love Robert in spite of her displeasure at his wild conduct, was overjoyed to receive this contrite message, and readily granting the pardon he asked, sent back a gracious invitation to him to accept the challenge of her principal suitor, the Duke of Granada, who proudly called on all rivals to meet him in open combat.

But when at last the heralds blared forth the haughty Duke's challenge to Robert of Normandy, no response was made, and though the challenge was repeated again and again, still Robert did not stand forth. Nor did he appear throughout the whole of the Tournament; and when, at the end of the contests, the Duke of Granada was declared victor and winner of the fair Princess's hand, Isabella returned to her apartments overcome with grief and despair, feeling that Robert had betrayed her trust and scorned her love.

Now, Robert's absence from the Tournament had been cunningly contrived by the fiend-knight, Bertram, who had no desire for his victim to retrieve his character by gaining honour and glory in combat; so, having lured him away from the scene by a phantom in the form of his hated rival, the Duke of Granada, he led him to a desert place outside the city.

Having induced him to enter a gloomy cave, where he intended to reveal a secret to him, and also inquire of the spirits of darkness concerning him, Bertram returned for a moment to the open ground; and here, to his annoyance, he found Raimbaud the minstrel, who announced that he awaited Alice, his betrothed, whom he had asked to meet him there, as they intended to be wedded that day.

Being anxious for him to depart, the knight gave Raimbaud a handsome gift of gold, bidding him think no more of Alice, but return to his wanderings once again, since being now rich, he would quickly find many other pretty girls willing to love him; and the minstrel, held for the time being under the spell of Bertram's evil influence, at once hurried back to the city, where, however, better feelings prevailing again, he waited at the entrance for his betrothed.

Bertram now returned to the cave and invoked the evil spirits he knew so well. Whilst this invocation was going on, Alice appeared at the trysting-place, and, full of disappointment that her lover had failed to keep his engagement, crept

into the mouth of the cave to await him.

Here she was alarmed to see vivid flashes of lightning, and to hear, amidst dreadful rumblings, the unearthly voices of demons calling a greeting to Robert; and fearing that her beloved fosterbrother was in woeful danger, she was just about to spring forward to the spot where a flash of lightning presently revealed him to her sight, when Bertram suddenly blocked her path. He first attempted to address her in tones of gallantry, but the girl shrank back with such a look of unutterable horror in her eyes that the fiend knew at once she had guessed the secret of his true identity. Seizing her by the arm, he passionately declared that if she ever betrayed his secret, or revealed aught of what she had seen and heard in the cave, she should die, and also bring death upon her lover, and all whom she held dear: and Alice, though she longed to warn Robert, was so terrified by the awful aspect of Bertram that she dared not do so, but rushed wildly from the cave.

Bertram then returned to Robert, and divulged to him an evil scheme, by means of which he hoped to utterly destroy his soul. He invited him to visit the spot where Princess Bertha had been buried, and to pluck therefrom a certain magic bough that would give him resistless power, and enable him to satisfy every earthly desire, no matter how evil or impossible it might be; and Robert deprived of the good in-

fluence of Alice, readily yielded to his solicitations, and set off at once with his fiend-counsellor for the Convent of Rosalie, where his mother's remains had been laid.

This Convent had been founded by Princess Bertha for pure Christian worship; but the spot had soon been deprived of its sanctity by the nuns themselves, who, forgetting their vows, had adored heathen gods, and offered impious sacrifices. Where virtue had once been cherished, vice only now dwelt, and when Bertram and Robert appeared amidst the gravestones, the evil spirits of the fallen nuns arose from all sides, and taking on the form of beautiful nymphs, assisted in the temptation of the victim.

For a short time Robert tried to resist the evil influences around him; but soon the insidious goading of Bertram prevailed, and plucking the magic bough, he rushed madly from the spot. His tempter quickly followed, bidding him to possess himself of the Princess of Sicily, whose innocence he might now destroy unhindered, in revenge for the scorn with which her proud father had treated him; and roused to madness by the subtle suggestion, Robert instantly returned to Palermo to carry it out.

It was the day of Princess Isabella's nuptials with the Duke of Granada, whom she still disliked, though forced by her father to wed with him; and her attendants, attired in wedding garments, were just waiting in the ante-room to conduct the unhappy bride to the adjoining church as Robert entered.

By the power of his magic bough, the frenzied young Duke instantly caused all the attendants to fall into a charmed sleep; and then, hurrying into the apartment beyond, he attempted to carry off the Princess by force. Isabella, quickly reading her ravisher's purpose in the evil passion that blazed in his eyes, fell on her knees, and implored him by the pure love he had once felt for her to show mercy upon her helplessness; and Robert, after a wild struggle with the evil desires within him, was at

length overcome by her entreaties, and full of

remorse, destroyed his talisman.

Instantly his magic powers vanished, so that the attendants, awakening from their charmed sleep in drowsy astonishment, suddenly beheld the intruder; and quickly divining his fell purpose, they rushed forward to seize him. Robert, however, taking to flight, escaped their hands, and the attendants, returning to the now grief-stricken bride, conducted her to the church in state, to await her bridegroom.

Robert found refuge in the cloisters of the church, and here he was soon joined by Bertram, who, at last revealing himself as his fiend-father, now produced a parchment, begging him to sign it, by which act

he would be bound to him for ever.

Though amazed to learn of the true identity of Bertram, Robert did not draw back in horror, since, in his hopeless misery, he still regarded the fiend as his best friend; and he was just about to sign the contract, when the peasant girl, Alice, suddenly appeared in the cloisters, and implored him to refrain from such a dreadful deed, since she had brought a joyful message for him.

She announced that Heaven watched over him and favoured his union with the woman he loved, for the proud Duke of Granada and his attendants had not been able to cross the threshold of the church; and she added that the beautiful Isabella, whose love was still his, now awaited him at the altar, hoping, by

their union, to lead him to a better life.

On hearing this, Robert's despair became greater still, torn between the prospects of pure joys held out by Alice, and the wicked enticements of Bertram; and a mighty struggle betwixt good and evil at once

took place.

Alice, in her holy enthusiasm, no longer afraid of the fiend, fought desperately for the soul she longed to save; and as her final effort, she produced a letter from the deceased Princess Bertha, in which the redeemed mother warned her son against the fiend who sought to destroy him, and reminded him

that she still prayed for him above.

This heavenly message at last prevailed over the wavering Robert, and decided him to adopt the better course; and refusing to be tempted longer by the wicked Bertram, he joyfully allowed himself to be led away by Alice to join his waiting bride at the altar.

The defeated fiend, realising that his cause was now lost for ever, instantly disappeared from the earth; and at the same moment a chorus of heavenly voices was heard rejoicing over the victory of a soul reclaimed from evil

THE HUGUENOTS

(Les Huguenots)

Towards the close of an August day, in the year 1572, a festive scene was taking place in the Castle de Nevers, in the fair land of Touraine; for the young Count de Nevers, a Catholic nobleman of great wealth and vast estates, was entertaining his friends at a magnificent banquet, set out with all the luxurious

extravagance customary to his high position.

All the gentlemen present were Catholics; and so, when De Nevers presently announced that he had invited a young Huguenot gentleman, one Sir Raoul de Nangis, to join them at the board, they were at first filled with surprise and displeasure; but upon their host assuring them that his new friend was of noble blood, and had been received well at Court, they were somewhat mollified, and awaited his arrival with eager expectation, intending to exercise their wit at his expense, for the feuds between the Huguenot and Catholic parties in France at this time had now reached the culminating point when an outburst between the two factions was daily looked for.

Consequently, when Raoul de Nangis was at length announced, he was received by the guests at first with suspicion, changing gradually to easy tolerance, for his handsome appearance and noble air dispelled the contempt usually expressed for those of the new faith; and seeing that he wore a somewhat pensive look, they presently began to rally him on his abstraction, declaring that he must be in love and

thinking of his fair lady.

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Raoul, being of a frank and sunny nature, readily fell in with their mood, and admitted that they had indeed guessed the truth; and upon being pressed further, he told them the story of his first meeting with his lady-love, which had happened only that very morning. During his rambles through the town, he had observed a sedan-chair in which was seated a very beautiful young girl, and which was at the moment surrounded by a group of hilarious students, who were annoying its fair occupant, and alarming her with their vulgar attentions; and, full of indignation, he had drawn his sword, and rushed amongst the importunate loiterers, quickly scattering them. Then, when the lady he had thus saved from annovance had poured her grateful thanks upon him. he had been so enthralled by her witching smiles and sweet beauty, that he had fallen desperately in love with her at first sight, and now declared that she was the lady of his heart for ever.

As this pretty story came to an end, the entrance of Raoul's old Huguenot servant, Marcello, created a diversion; for his odd appearance, quaint dress, and severe puritanical manners made him a ready butt for the wit of the gay cavaliers in whose company he now found himself very much against his will. He could not refrain from expressing his disapproval of this frivolous scene, and upbraided his young master for sharing in what his strict notions compelled him

to consider sinful pleasures.

Afraid that Marcello's severe remarks would offend the proud Catholic nobles, Raoul apologised for his outspoken manner, and craved their indulgence, since Marcello was an old and faithful retainer of his family, and had been accustomed to many privileges not usually extended to serving-men; but the merry guests declared that the old man amused them greatly, and they only treated his censure with laughing derision.

Whilst this slight diversion was taking place, a lady, closely veiled, was seen to enter the grounds,

following a servant, who conducted her to an arbour within view of the banquet-hall; and presently the attendant entered to announce that the veiled lady desired an immediate interview in private with the Count de Nevers. The bantering now fell to the share of the young host, his guests declaring that he must indeed be fascinating, since his fair conquests even called him away from his feasts; and when De Nevers had excused himself, and departed to his interview, they all crowded to the window, dragging Raoul with them, in order to catch a glimpse of the mysterious fair one.

As De Nangis looked carelessly towards the arbour, the lady removed a portion of her veil as she addressed De Nevers; and to his surprise and grief, the young Huguenot recognised the beautiful face of the lady he had assisted in the morning, and by whom his heart had immediately been taken captive.

Full of sorrow and disappointment at thus discovering his lady-love to be, as he now naturally supposed from this incident, the mistress of De Nevers, Raoul uttered an exclamation of anger, and would have rushed out into the grounds to interrupt the interview, but was laughingly held back by the lively guests; and shortly afterwards De Nevers returned to the room, wearing a now weary and somewhat preoccupied air.

For the mysterious lady whom he had just interviewed, and whom Raoul had so sadly recognised, had proved to be his own fiancée, Valentina, the beautiful daughter of the Count de St. Bris, Governor of the Louvre, and one of the principal leaders of the Catholic party; and the object of her visit had been to implore De Nevers to relinquish her hand, since she did not love him, and was only being coerced into the union by the will of her ambitious father.

When De Nevers returned to the banquet-hall, he was instantly surrounded by the laughing guests, who showered eager questions upon him as to the

identity of the veiled lady; but at this moment there came another interruption in the person of Urbano, one of Queen Marguerite's pages, who announced that he was the bearer of a letter from his royal mistress to Sir Raoul de Nangis.

Full of amazement, Raoul broke open the missive, and found that it contained a command from the young Queen to attend her Court that evening before sunset, and added that a carriage would be waiting for him at a certain time, to conduct him to his

destination.

Surprised that the young stranger whom they had been inclined to treat somewhat disdainfully was thus about to be so greatly honoured, the fickle guests now began to pour enthusiastic congratulations upon Raoul, and to treat him with marked respect; and so, for the remainder of the banquet, the young Huguenot found himself the centre of attraction.

Meanwhile, Queen Marguerite of Navarre, with her Maids-of-Honour, was awaiting in the grounds of the Castle of Chenonceaux the return of Valentina, whom she intended to use as the means of uniting the antagonistic Catholic and Huguenot parties, having formed the plan of wedding this fair daughter of the Catholic leader, the Count de St. Bris, to the handsome Huguenot noble, Sir Raoul de Nangis; and for this purpose she had persuaded Valentina to visit her fiancé in secret, and beg him to release her hand.

Valentina had been willing enough to fall in with this plan, for she had already become deeply attached to Raoul, whom she had quickly identified with the gallant cavalier who had saved her from the annoyance of the students only that very morning; and when on her return from her painful mission she informed the Queen that De Nevers had promised to relinquish her hand, she was filled with joy, mingled with shyness, on being told that De Nangis was expected almost immediately, and that her

betrothal to him would soon afterwards be announced before the whole Court, her father having been persuaded by Queen Marguerite to renounce the more ambitious match he had arranged for her, and to consent to this betrothal as a step towards reconciling the two religious parties.

Whilst they were talking together, Raoul arrived, and was conducted immediately into the presence of the Queen; and as greetings and courtly speeches were being exchanged, Valentina timidly crept away

into the background.

Then Queen Marguerite explained to the young Huguenot her reason for desiring his presence, and the marriage she had arranged for him; and Raoul, no longer caring to have any choice in such a matter, since the one upon whom he had fixed his affections had proved to be unworthy, as he supposed, gave

his consent readily enough.

Very soon afterwards, the Count de St. Bris and the other lords of the Court appeared on the scene, the Catholic lords ranging themselves in a group on one side of the Queen, and the Huguenots on the other. All had been made aware of the matter in hand; and so, when Queen Marguerite desired the two parties to vow friendship and peace with one another, they took the oath without demur.

Then, at a sign from the Queen, St. Bris led his beautiful young daughter forward to present her in betrothal to the young Huguenot noble; but Raoul drew back with a loud exclamation of repugnance, as he now beheld his offered bride to be none other than she whom he believed to be the mistress of De Nevers, and he declared passionately that he would

not wed with one so perfidious.

The Queen and her Courtiers were amazed and indignant at this unexpected outburst, and Valentina was filled with despair, for she already loved De Nangis, and had hoped that her affection was re turned; but Raoul, still believing her to be base, again declared that he would not bring disgrace upon

his ancient name by wedding with one so unworthy, and with these words departed, leaving the com-

pany in a state of great confusion.

Soon after these events, the whole Court removed to Paris, where the Catholic plot for a general massacre of the Huguenots was quickly coming to a head; and the Count de St. Bris, who had only sworn friendship with the Huguenots to please Queen Marguerite, now lost no time in reopening negotiations for his daughter's marriage with the Catholic noble, De Nevers, after having first of all sent a challenge to Raoul de Nangis for satisfaction of the insult that had been put upon his name.

On the appointed day of the wedding, Valentina, who had broken-heartedly obeyed her father's wishes, entreated to be left alone in a little chapel situated on the banks of the Seine until evening, that she might spend the time in prayer and meditation; and in accordance with her wish, she was left in the sacred building until twilight had set in.

Shortly after dusk, De Nevers arrived on the scene with St. Bris and other lords, to claim his bride; but ere they entered the chapel, however, the old Huguenot retainer, Marcello, suddenly appeared, and handed a note from his master to St. Bris, in which Raoul accepted his challenge, and appointed a meeting for that night.

When Marcello was out of hearing, Maurevert, one of the lords present, suggested a plot to St. Bris, whereby they could surround and assassinate the young Huguenot without risk to their own lives; and having arranged this, they retired to await his

arrival.

Now, though they knew it not, Valentina, through the open door of the chapel, had heard the whole plot; and when they had gone, she crept from the building with trembling steps, hoping that she might find some means of warning Raoul, who, in spite of his strange treatment of her, she still loved, and would willingly save from such a peril.

At that moment, old Marcello came by again; and, recognising him as De Nangis' servant, Valentina intercepted him, and, telling him of the proposed plot, besought him to devise some means of saving his master's life. Marcello, full of alarm, rushed off at once to seek help; and in a short time he returned, having arranged with a party of Huguenot soldiers, who were supping at a tavern close by, to come to his master's assistance at the first sound of strife.

Valentina then returned to the chapel; and shortly afterwards Raoul and St. Bris, with their seconds, appeared at the appointed place on the banks of the Seine, and the arrangements for the duel were made in accordance with the customary etiquette.

Ere the duel had begun, however, a band of the Catholic followers of Maurevert suddenly surrounded Raoul; and in another moment he would have been slain, but for the prompt arrival of the Huguenot soldiers, who dashed boldly amidst the assassins with drawn swords. The two parties now began to fight; but the combat was soon interrupted by the approach of Queen Marguerite and her escort returning to the Palace.

With an imperious gesture, the young Queen bade the combatants cease, and inquired the cause of the strife; and when Raoul's story was hotly contradicted by St. Bris, old Marcello came forward and verified his master's version, declaring that the warning of treachery had come from the lady who was even

then issuing from the chapel.

Valentina, indeed, at that moment came forth, overcome with anxiety for her lover's safety, yet full of fear at being discovered interfering on his behalf. All were amazed at her appearance; and Raoul, who had not been able to quell his love for her, for all that he had spurned her, was bewildered at hearing that she had been the means of saving his life, and, doubtful now of his former suspicions, asked how she had come to be seen by him at the house of De Nevers that fatal evening.

Queen Marguerite answered for the agitated girl, saying that Valentina had gone at her own request to De Nevers, to implore him to renounce her hand; and when Raoul thus knew that Valentina's motive had been a pure and honourable one, and not as he had so jealously imagined, for an unworthy

reason, he was filled with joy.

But his joy was quickly turned to grief once more, on learning that Valentina was about to become the bride of another; and at that moment, De Nevers appeared in a splendid barge, in which he was to carry away his bride-elect. As De Nevers landed St. Bris presented his daughter to him with pride, throwing a triumphant glance towards the wretched De Nangis; and, full of elation, the young Catholic noble led his beautiful though now half-fainting fiancée to the barge, in which they were conducted to his mansion, where their nuptials were celebrated that same evening.

Raoul was now plunged into despair at having thus lost the maiden he loved so well, and for several days was almost beside himself with grief; and at last, unable to bear his misery any longer, on the fatal eve of St. Bartholomew, he determined to make an effort to see Valentina once more even at the risk

of his life.

Quite unsuspicious of the terrible fate that was to fall on those of his faith that night, the young Huguenot repaired to the mansion of De Nevers, and managed to make his way unperceived into the very room in which Valentina sat, lost in meditation; for she was at the moment bemoaning her sad fate at having been compelled to wed a man she did not love, when her heart was given to another.

As Raoul broke in upon these sad reflections, she was filled with dismay; but scarcely had she exchanged greetings with her distracted lover than she heard the approaching voices of her father and husband, and knew that the discovery of De Nangis alone with her at that hour would mean danger to

him and disgrace to herself. In frightened tones she besought him to fly whilst he yet had time; but Raoul declared that he cared not for danger, and would gladly welcome death, since she was lost to him. Valentina, however, entreated him not to be so rash, since his safety was dear to her; and then, finding that the approaching voices were drawing nearer, and that there was no longer time for him to escape, she thrust him behind a heavy curtain, bidding him, by their love, to remain in hiding until

the danger was past.

Almost immediately afterwards, De Nevers, St. Bris, and a number of other Catholic lords entered the room, and proceeded to hold a conference; and when they were all assembled, St. Bris unfolded to them the dreadful plot of the Catholic King, Charles IX., whereby at the tolling of a bell that night, the Huguenots, one and all, irrespective of age, sex, or position, were to be massacred without mercy. He next administered an oath, bidding them swear, as good Catholics, to assist in this terrible work, and to show no mercy. All took the oath except De Nevers, who, being of a noble disposition, indig nantly refused to disgrace his ancient name by joining in such a murderous enterprise; but, in order to convince the now suspicious lords that he should not betray their plot, even though he would not share in it, he threw his sword at their feet and stood disarmed before them all.

St. Bris then gave his final instructions, bidding the conspirators to disperse in various directions and await the tolling of the bell, which should be the signal for commencing the carnage; and after tying white scarves round their arms, in order to distinguish themselves from their intended victims, the party left the room and departed on their awful mission, leaving the trembling Valentina alone.

No sooner had they gone, than Raoul sprang from his hiding-place, pale and filled with horror at the terrible plot that had, unknown to the assassins, been revealed to him; and hoping yet to be in time to warn his brother Huguenots of the calamity about to fall on them, he would have instantly rushed from the house, had not Valentina held him back, wildly imploring him not to venture into the streets that night, for since she now loved him with her whole heart, his life was too precious for her to bear the thought of his almost certain death, should he take such a risk.

Even in this moment of confusion and danger, Raoul's heart thrilled with a deep joy at thus learning that his love was returned, and he clasped Valentina in his arms in a passionate embrace; but, in spite of this double temptation to remain, his noble nature asserted itself, and upon hearing the sudden clanging of a deep bell, which he knew to be the signal for the Huguenots' doom, he struggled from the tender restraining arms of the now swooning Valentina, as she tried vainly to hold him back, and dashed from the house.

The massacre had already begun, and the streets of Paris were even now running with the innocent blood of the murdered Huguenots, whilst the night was made hideous with the shrieks of the helpless victims and the triumphant cries of those who, in such mistaken zeal, were thus carrying out the dreadful instructions that had been given to them.

As Raoul, filled with horror at the awful scenes of carnage that met his eyes on every side, hastened through the streets in the vain hope that he might yet be in time to save some of his doomed brethren of the faith, he stumbled against a wounded man, and, to his joy, he found that this was none other than his own faithful old body-servant, Marcello.

Equally glad at thus meeting with his beloved master, whom he had never expected to see again alive, Marcello described the terrible scenes that had already taken place, adding that they could now do nothing to help their Huguenot friends, since it was impossible to stem the fury of their remorseless foes, and that they themselves must also be prepared to meet death, since they could not hope to escape.

Whilst they were still standing together, they were overtaken by Valentina, who, on recovering from her swoon, had followed Raoul with frantic haste, hoping that she might even yet be able to save him from his enemies: and she now held out towards him a white scarf she had brought, beseeching him to allow her to fasten it round his arm, that he might then be taken for a Catholic, and so be safe from harm in the streets, adding that if he would proceed with her to the Louvre, and abjure his unfortunate faith, he would receive a free pardon. To strengthen her entreaty, she added that if he would fall in with her plan, when peace had afterwards been restored, they could be wed and be happy together yet; for Marcello had just related to them how his own life had been saved by the brave conduct of the Count de Nevers, who, by endeavouring to protect the old Huguenot from the hand of the Catholics, had himself been slain.

But Raoul, though now terribly tempted by this alluring picture of safety and happiness, was too noble to save himself by denying the religion for which his companions in the faith were still sacrificing their lives; and, refusing the white scarf, he declared that he would remain with Marcello and

await his fate.

When Valentina saw that he was thus resolved, she threw herself into his arms, declaring that she would die with him as a Huguenot also, since without him she cared no longer to live; and then, hand-in-hand, they knelt together in the street, and old Marcello uttered a prayer of blessing, as the consecration of their love and devotion.

Whilst they thus prayed together, a party of Catholic musketeers surrounded them, and, eager for more victims, demanded if they were of the true faith or not; and without a moment's hesitation, Raoul replied that they were Huguenots. The

musketeers instantly fired a volley upon the little group; and all three fell to the ground, mortally wounded.

The Count de St. Bris was at the head of this company; and upon approaching the fallen victims, he was filled with horror at discovering that he had

fired upon his own beloved daughter!

On hearing his exclamation of grief, the dying Valentina opened her eyes once more, and weakly murmured a few words of forgiveness; and then, falling back, she expired in the arms of her dead Huguenot lover!

THE STAR OF THE NORTH

(L'Etoile du Nord)

ONE sunny noontide, towards the end of the seventeenth century, a number of workmen in the shipyard of a certain little village in Finland were resting from their labours during the dinner hour; and as they chatted and laughed together a pastry-cook presently appeared in their midst with a basket of fresh sweetmeats, and quickly began to do a roaring trade. For Danilowitz, the pastry-cook, though not a native of the village, was a great favourite with the workmen, being a lively fellow, and ever ready to join in a merry jest; and since his wares were good, and of that delicate kind usually only to be got in large cities, he always found a ready market in the shipyard.

Amongst the group of idlers was one young man who alone continued his work, even during this hour of general relaxation. This industrious worker was a stranger also to the village, who had only taken up his abode there some few weeks ago, and was known amongst the villagers as Peter Michaeloff. But, though the simple peasants little guessed it, the young carpenter whom they treated as an equal was in reality none other than the Czar of Russia, Peter I., who, in accordance with his accustomed energy of character and love of thoroughness, had come thus to the village in humble dress and hired himself out as a carpenter, in order to learn for himself the art of shipbuilding, to know that his navy was being properly constructed. On his arrival in the

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village, he had fallen ill, and during his illness was tenderly nursed back to health by a fair maiden named Catherine Skavronski, whose brother, George, was a teacher of music; and having afterwards fallen deeply in love with this maiden, whose beauty and wonderful strength of character exercised extraordinary fascination over him, the young King lingered on in the village long after the time when he should have left. He was encouraged to this course by hearing Catherine declare one day that her dead mother, who had possessed wonderful gifts of propheey, had foretold a brilliant future for her; and he determined to persevere in his wooing, since the maiden would fulfil her destiny if she became his bride.

Catherine usually appeared in the shipyard at noon-day, to sell spirits to the workmen, in which she did a good trade, and earned enough money to keep herself and her brother, who, being of a weaker nature, had always allowed his energetic sister to take the lead in all things connected with their welfare.

But to-day the pretty cantinière was not at her usual trade, and the merry workmen presently began to rally Peter on his gloomy looks, knowing well enough that the cause was to be found in the absence of his sweetheart, Catherine. Peter's passionate nature at all times could ill brook badinage of this kind, and it was with difficulty he now restrained himself; but just at that time, one of the workmen began to sing a patriotic song in praise of Finland, and King Charles XII., and all joined in it uproariously, for the workmen were for the most part Finns or Swedes, to whom the sentiments of the song were acceptable.

Danilov tz, the pastry-cook, however, remained silent, with a frown on his face; and when the song came to an end, he raised his glass to his lips, and cried fearlessly, "I pledge the Czar, brave Peter the

First! "

Instantly there was a tumult amongst the men, who indignantly rushed forward to punish the rash man who had dared to drink to one whom they regarded as the enemy of their country; but, to the surprise of Danilowitz, Peter sprang to his aid, and

by his skilful defence, kept all at bay.

Just then, the bell for the recommencement of work clanged forth, and the workmen trooped off: and when they had gone, Peter and Danilowitz began to talk together, surprised at having thus discovered that they were countrymen. Danilowitz explaining that he found little opening for his trade in the small Finnish village, and thought of returning to his own country to seek employment under the Czar. whom he spoke of in terms of high praise, little dreaming that he stood before him; and Peter, pleased with the man's daring and evident ambition, invited him to return to Russia with himself, saving he also meant to seek service under the Czar, and prophesying success for his new friend should he join his army. Danilowitz eagerly agreed to his proposal, laughing light-heartedly at the honours which Peter declared were waiting for him; and when he had gone off to dispose of the remainder of his wares elsewhere. Peter made his way to the house of George Skayronski.

Hearing George playing one of Catherine's favourite airs, Peter took his own flute from his pocket, and began to play the same tune in answer; and George quickly appeared at the door, praising his excellent performance, and inviting him to enter for a lesson, since he was one of his most promising pupils. Upon Peter inquiring the cause of Catherine's absence from her accustomed duties, George explained that she had gone to plead his cause with the uncle and guardian of Prascovia, the pretty maiden whom he loved and desired to marry that day; and whilst they were thus talking together, Catherine herself came in, and announced exultantly that she had succeeded in her mission.

Peter now seized the opportunity of pleading his own cause with Catherine, who, as usual, only gave him sharp and merry rebuffs for answer, for although she had really loved him deeply from the beginning of their acquaintance, she so thoroughly understood the weak points of his character, that she always declared she could not marry him until he learned to keep his passions in control, to be less impetuous, and not so determined to have his own way in every matter.

Although Peter greatly appreciated Catherine's clear insight into his character, and knew that she admired his nobler qualities and instincts, he loved her so passionately that her rebukes constantly filled him with impatience; and this afternoon, as usual, he quickly lost his temper, to the great amusement of his tantalising sweetheart, who cried merrily, "There! There! A pretty husband you would make, to be sure!"

Whilst Peter was vainly endeavouring to choke back his right royal wrath at this saucy speech, the pretty little Prascovia hurriedly entered the house, in great agitation; and as George ran to her side in tender concern, she declared that she had been pursued by a party of Kalmuks and Cossacks, who were even now following her to the house with evil intent.

All were alarmed by this news, but Catherine boldly avowed that all would be well, since she herself would address these wild tribesmen, who were, indeed, her kinsmen, since her mother had been their priestess and held in great reverence by them. So when the Kalmuks presently came dashing up, the brave girl ran out fearlessly to meet them, and commanded them, in the name of her dead mother, the Princess Vlasta, instantly to forego their intention of raiding the house; and on hearing this revered name, the wild troop immediately withdrew respectfully.

Then Catherine approached their leader, Gritzenko,

and, seizing his hand, prophesied that promotion quickly awaited him in the army of the Czar; and filled with dreams of glory, Gritzenko soon led his

men away.

When they had gone, George and Prascovia went off to make arrangements for their wedding that evening; and thus Catherine and Peter were left alone. Catherine, having noticed with pleasure that during the whole time she had spoken with the Kalmuks, Peter had stood near at hand, grimly holding a hatchet, in readiness to dash out to her aid at the least sign of danger, now spoke tenderly to him. declaring that such noble conduct endeared him to her; and Peter was filled with joy, for he felt that his cause was not so hopeless after all, since he could see now that his love was returned, even though the high-spirited maiden did not as yet respect him. Thus fired with a passionate desire to win her regard at all costs, Peter impetuously determined to return with the Kalmuks to the army, and earn such renown as should compel her ungrudging admiration; and bidding Catherine a hasty farewell, he hurried off to seek out Danilowitz to return to Russia with him.

Catherine had not been long alone ere Prascovia returned, saying that all the preparations were now ready for her wedding that evening with George, who would shortly arrive with the wedding guests and musicians; and then, carelessly producing a letter, she handed it to her friend, saying it had been sent to her from the Burgomaster, and upon the letter being opened, the two girls read it together.

To their dismay, they found that this was an order for George to leave the village that night with the Muscovite soldiers who had just arrived, as he was one of twelve chosen recruits who had been impressed into the service of the Czar; but the Burgomaster added that if a substitute could be found to take his place, he would thus be freed from serving.

Prascovia was filled with distress and grief because

her wedding could not now take place, and began to weep bitterly, knowing well that no substitute could be found for George, since all in the village hated the Russians, and would refuse to serve the Czar unless compelled to do so; but Catherine, accustomed always to take her brother's troubles upon her own strong young shoulders, bade her dry her tears, and declared that she would herself take George's place as a recruit for a fortnight, so that he might be married that night after all, and also remain with his bride a short time before taking up his soldier's duties.

So when George returned, this plan was eagerly explained to him, and he promised to relieve Catherine of her difficult undertaking in a fortnight's time; and then, as the wedding guests, with the priest and musicians, shortly afterwards arrived, the marriage was celebrated with all the accustomed

rejoicings and merriment.

Catherine herself joined gaily in the lively wedding songs, for she delighted in the happiness of her brother, and was quite regardless of the hardships an' dangers she would shortly have to endure for his sake; but when the festivities were at their height she stole away unnoticed from the merry throng, and, dressing herself in male attire, went off courageously to join the recruits who were to march with the Russian troops that night.

And now for Catherine came a very difficult and trying time, since the training of a raw recruit was exceedingly exhausting and full of hardships; but the girl's own wonderful powers of endurance and dauntless spirit carried her through without misad-

venture, or discovery of her real identity.

At the end of a fortnight, the recruits all arrived at the Russian camp, where the imperial forces were gathered and waiting to attack the armies of Sweden, with which country they were then at war; and here Catherine met with her first difficulty. For the Kalmuk, Gritzenko, who had already attained promotion to the rank of corporal, in accordance with her prophecy, had many times on the march eyed her with curiosity, as though he half recognised her; and on arriving in the camp, he called her up to him, saying that her face reminded him of a pretty maiden who used to sell spirits in the Finnish village

they had just left.

Catherine, though trembling for fear of discovery, laughingly put him off by declaring that the maiden he spoke of must have been her own sister; and then. by entering into friendly conversation with the talkative soldier, she learnt from him, to her surprise and consternation, that a serious conspiracy amongst many of the chief officers was afoot in the camp, unknown to the general in command, and that Gritzenko himself was receiving large sums of money for carrying treasonable documents, though, being unable to read or write, he was quite ignorant of their contents and purpose, thinking conceitedly that the money bestowed upon him was given by the officers concerned as a reward for his own military zeal and good conduct. Catherine, however, being educated and quick-witted, quickly grasped the situation. and having hastily read the documents produced by Gritzenko, she kept the true knowledge of their contents to herself, leaving the ignorant soldier in his former belief, but afterwards wrote down the names of the officers concerned on a slip of paper, which she concealed in her coat, intending to form some plan of action later. Then, being ordered by Gritzenko to mount guard as sentinel outside a certain tent, within which a rich supper had been laid, pending the arrival of some distinguished officers, she commenced her patrol up and down.

Soon afterwards, whilst Catherine was at the far end of her beat, the expected officers arrived, and entered the tent, their features being unobserved by her; and these new arrivals were none other than Peter and Danilowitz, the latter already a colonel in the Russian army, and rejoicing in the confidence of his companion, whose true identity was of course now known to him.

Peter, though in the dress of a plain captain, was received respectfully by the general in command as Czar, but immediately requested that his incognito should be strictly preserved for the present, since he had been told of the conspiracy in the camp, and had boldly come to quell it in person, having already thought out a scheme by which success would be assured; and when the general had retired, astonished at the news, Peter and Danilowitz sat down to enjoy the supper that had been prepared for them, and which was served by two very pretty and lively little vivandières.

Peter, as he ever did in his moments of relaxation, gave himself up unreservedly to the pleasure of the moment; and casting aside for the time being the cares of State, he began to carouse gaily with Danilowitz, drinking deeply, and caressing the pretty vivandières with the accustomed licence of the times.

Catherine, attracted by the sounds of hilarity that issued from the tent, and forgetful of military discipline, could not refrain from peeping through the opening; and instantly recognising Peter, she was filled with joy on hearing her own name toasted by him at that moment. Her delight, however, quickly turned to indignation on beholding her lover, heated by the wine he had drunk, the next instant freely embracing the vivandière who so constantly kept his goblet filled; and as she continued to look angrily upon the scene, Gritzenko came by, and, discovering the sentry thus forgetful of his duty, instantly dragged her away, and ordered her into confinement.

Catherine, already upset by the scene within the tent, and resenting the rough handling of the Kalmuk, struck him angrily on the face, upon which Gritzenko, furious at being thus defied by a mere recruit, forced her into the tent before the officers,

and, explaining her insubordination, demanded

reparation.

Peter, impatient at this unwelcome interruption of his pleasure, and without even looking upon the offender, cried out carelessly: "Let him be shot!"

Catherine, now realising the danger of her position, called out as she was being dragged away to execution, "Peter! Peter! Do not let me be killed, but

save me! "

At first, Peter, still under the influence of the strong wines he had been drinking, did not heed her appeal, but as her last despairing cry rang out as she was hustled from the tent, his attention was suddenly arrested, and at length, recognising the voice as that of his beloved Catherine, he sprang to his feet in bewilderment. Then, the shock of his discovery quickly restoring his clouded senses, he felt convinced that the young recruit was indeed the village maiden in disguise, and, overcome with horror that he had so carelessly given orders for her execution, he authoritatively commanded the pair to

be brought back.

But Gritzenko, in his zeal, had already endeavoured to carry out the first command; and when he was at length brought back to Peter, he explained that the prisoner had attempted to escape by swimming the river close by, upon which he had promptly shot his victim in the water. Then, well satisfied with what he had done, the Kalmuk handed Peter a note, which he stated the young recruit had flung to him before plunging into the stream; and upon open ing this missive, the now despairing lover saw that it contained the names of those officers concerned in the conspiracy, at the end of which was a message written in haste by Catherine, bidding him to use this information to advance himself in the favour of the Czar. Enclosed in the paper was the ring he had himself given to her; and as he gazed upon this ring, and read her last tender message of farewell, Peter was plunged into the deepest woe, realising that by his own rash impetuosity the maiden he loved so passionately was now lost to him for ever.

At that moment, the leaders of the conspiracy entered the tent, and, regarding Peter and Danilowitz as belonging to their party, began to talk over their plans of insurrection, declaring that at a given signal they intended to join the ranks of the enemy against the Czar, followed by all the men in the imperial army whom they had affected; and Peter, thus roused from his grief by this pressing need for immediate action, quickly determined to turn this moment of danger to advantage by his own fearless daring. In spite of the efforts made to restrain him by Danilowitz, who trembled for the safety of his beloved sovereign, thus unprotected in the midst of traitors, he sprang forward and rebuked the officers passionately for thus seeking to avenge their own petty grievances by the sacrifice of their honour at a time when their country was in danger; and having worked them up into the wildest enthusiasm of patriotism by his burning eloquence, he implored them to first drive away the enemies of their land, after which he swore that he would himself deliver up the Czar to them, unprotected and alone, to deal with as they chose.

The conspirators, although already rendered ashamed of their base designs by these scathing words, yet demanded who should be their guarantee of this; and Peter, without a moment's hesitation, answered fearlessly: "I, the Czar, whom you were about to betray! Now slay me if you will!"

But for answer, the conspirators instantly fell on their knees, imploring pardon for their treachery; for they were completely conquered by the dauntless courage thus displayed by the young monarch, whose brave and warlike spirit they had ever admired, even whilst resenting his strict discipline, which had been the cause of their insurrection.

Thus, by a single bold action, and the influence of his own noble personality, did Peter quell the mutinous spirit which had threatened such disaster to his arms; and, having once restored the patriotism of his men, and their loyalty to himself as King, he was now able to lead them on to victory, and scatter

the enemies of his country.

Whilst engaged in active warfare, as leader of his now enthusiastic army, Peter had no time to think of his lost Catherine; but when peaceful days came once again, and he returned to the royal palace, all his old grief broke out afresh, and he was plunged into the deepest melancholy.

In order to try to drown his sad thoughts, from time to time he would take up his carpenter's work once more; but even when labouring his hardest, the beautiful face of the maiden he had loved so dearly still intruded, a bright mental picture he could never

forget.

Acting upon his instructions, Danilowitz had made every possible effort to discover what had become of the lost Catherine; for, though fired at in the water, Peter clung to the belief that she was not dead, but might possibly have escaped to land,

since her body had never been recovered.

At first, Danilowitz found his task a hopeless one; but at length his efforts were crowned with success, and having learnt from a poor peasant woman that she had rescued a wounded soldier from the river some weeks ago, whom she had since discovered to be a female, he bade her bring the girl to his own private

room in the palace.

The rescued maiden was accordingly brought to the palace, and proved indeed to be Catherine; but, to the consternation of Danilowitz, he discovered that the shock of her wounds and the terrible hardships she had gone through had told so heavily upon the poor girl's mental activities, that, though now restored to bodily health, she had completely forgotten all the circumstances connected with her love for Peter, the mention of whose name had no meaning for her.

Wondering how he should break this sad news to his royal master, Danilowitz went into the presence chamber with a preoccupied air, and upon Peter as usual peremptorily demanding if he yet had news of his lost love, afraid to tell him the truth, he endeavoured to put him off for a while by admitting that he had got a clue, though he feared that little would result from it.

Whilst they were talking together, Gritzenko entered, and upon Peter demanding the reason why his privacy should be thus disturbed, the conceited soldier announced that he had come to ask for promotion, saying that he considered this to be his due for the zeal he had displayed in having fired upon the recruit who had dared to strike him.

Now recognising Gritzenko as the man who had been the unconscious cause of all his woe, Peter flew into a violent passion on hearing his request, and, seizing a weapon, would have killed him instantly, had not Danilowitz restrained him; and then controlling himself by a violent effort, he left the room, after commanding the Kalmuk, upon pain of death, to produce, ere the next day ended, the recruit

whom he had fired upon in the water.

As Gritzenko moved away, astonished at being thus blamed for having done, as he considered, his duty as a zealous soldier, and grumbling at the vagaries of the great, he encountered Prascovia and George Skavronski, the latter having come at last to relieve his sister and join the regiment he had been impressed into, and who, having discovered that Catherine had disappeared, had now came to the palace with his bride to get news of her; and having some days before received instructions to detain all who came from the little Finnish village, now beloved by the Czar, the Kalmuk took the pair into his charge, and kept them under guard, until he should receive the will of his royal master regarding their disposal.

Meanwhile, Peter, having heard Catherine singing

as he passed along the corridor, and instantly recognising her voice with overwhelming joy, Danilowitz could no longer keep the secret of her presence from him; and as gently as possible he broke to him the sad news of her disturbed mental state and forgetfulness of himself.

Peter was again plunged into despair on thus learning that though his beloved Catherine was restored to him, she no longer remembered their love; but upon Danilowitz mentioning that the poor girl's thoughts all centred round her old home, and especially the events connected with her brother's marriage, a sudden hope sprang up within him, for he remembered having heard of cases similar to that of Catherine, where persons so affected had been restored to their normal state by being again brought into contact with scenes and incidents which had strongly impressed them in their happier days.

Determined to try this course with Catherine, whom he now longed to thus restore that she might become his Empress, Peter quickly pressed Danilowitz, together with Prascovia and George (of whose arrival he was presently informed by Gritzenko), and certain other peasants who had recently arrived from Finland, into his service; and with all a lover's eager hope, he proceeded to instruct them in their parts.

All were soon ready; and when Catherine was brought into the room, the peasants began to sing the same song they had sung at her brother's wedding, with George and Prascovia moving amongst them in their festive garments. Then Danilowitz, having donned his old pastry-cook's dress, sang the song he used to sing in the village when offering his wares; and finally, Peter himself took up his flute, and began to play Catherine's own favourite air, which was so closely bound up with the story of their love.

As Catherine listened to this sweet music, her memory was indeed gradually awakened, as her lover had hoped, until the cloud of forgetfulness was entirely removed from her mind; and at last, recognising in the kingly figure so eagerly watching her, the features of the man she had loved so dearly in the past, she moved forward with a glad cry, and

was clasped in his arms.

Full of joy that his beloved one was thus restored to reason, Peter led her proudly forward to receive the homage of his friends and helpers, who one and all greeted her respectfully as their future Empress; and thus did the humble Catherine fulfil the brilliant destiny prophesied by her priestess mother, and become the bride and good genius of a great monarch, who always loved and revered her as his guiding star, his precious "Star of the North!"

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

(Le Nozze di Figaro)

ONE bright summer morning a pleasant hum of excitement pervaded Count Almaviva's noble castle near Seville; for that evening, Figaro, the Count's servant, was to be wedded to the Countess's pretty waiting-maid, Susanna, and the nuptials were to be celebrated with great festivities, in which not only the whole household, but the peasants on the estate were to join. Already the rustic maidens and their swains were decking themselves in holiday garb, for there was to be dancing and merry-making on the green during the daytime before the feasting and fireworks at night, and all were eager to begin the revels.

But, though the light-hearted peasants little guessed it, the bride and bridegroom elect were fated to go through many wild mishaps ere their hands could be joined that day, and even now, early though it was, the first cloud had arisen. For Figaro had just made the unpleasant discovery that his master, whose chief excitement in life was to engage in love intrigues, had suddenly become infatuated with the charms of Susanna, and though the information was given him by the pretty Susanna herself, who laughingly disclaimed any preference for the amorous Count, the future husband was filled with perplexing thoughts.

He now understood why Basilio, an old musicmaster established at the castle to help the great lord in his intrigues, had lately persuaded him to desire

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Susanna to accept a secret mission to London offered her by the Count, who was being sent by the King to that city as Ambassador, with Figaro attending him as Courier, for it was plain to see that his secret mission had been invented in order that the Ambassador might enjoy the society of his Courier's charming wife. However, Figaro was a lively fellow, whose keen wits had helped him out of many difficulties; and though indignant at the news, he merrily assured Susanna that he would soon devise a plan for thwarting the Count and his confederate.

Now, Figaro, besides being witty and gay, was also of a handsome appearance; and so it happened that a certain dame, named Marcellina, who, though advancing in years, was of skittish and sentimental disposition, became enamoured of the fascinating valet, when on a visit to the castle about this

time.

Being in need of money, owing to his extravagant habits, Figaro had consequently found Marcellina very willing to lend him a considerable sum, on condition that he signed a paper promising to marry her unless he refunded the money; and the gay valet, never dreaming that he would ever be called on to keep his agreement, carelessly signed the document.

However, Marcellina was in earnest, and, having got beyond the age when admirers were to be secured by her personal attractions, did not intend to let such a good chance of marriage slip through her fingers; and on discovering that Figaro was about to be wedded to Susanna, she was filled with indignation, and sent at once to Seville for Dr Bartolo, whose housekeeper she had been for many years, and with whom she had once indulged in a love intrigue.

The worthy doctor did not arrive until the very day of the wedding; but Marcellina, declaring that there was still time to secure her rights, produced the contract she had induced Figaro to sign, and begged him to help her to prevent the marriage. Dr Bartolo, who had also had a grudge against Figaro for having thwarted him on a former occasion, readily agreed to help her; and between them the pair arranged that Susanna should be frightened by a threat of making known her master's advances to her, when, to save her reputation, she would rebuff the Count, who, being piqued, would then give assistance to Marcellina's claim.

To this end, Marcellina presently waylaid Susanna in the pretty maid's own apartment, and began to squabble, hinting plainly that the Count's infatuation for her would soon be known to all; but Susanna, though somewhat alarmed, only met her taunts with saucy retorts, and soon forced her to beat a

hasty retreat.

No sooner had she gone than the Countess's page, Cherubino, a handsome youth who adored his mistress, yet made love to all the maids in the castle, rushed into the room, and announcing that the Count had just dismissed him from his service, because he had found him flirting with the gardener's charming daughter, Barbarina, entreated Susanna to intercede for him.

Whilst they were talking together, the Count was heard approaching, and, terrified at the thought of being discovered with the favoured lady's-maid, Cherubino hastily hid behind a large arm-chair, just

as his master entered the room.

The enamoured Count immediately began to make love to Susanna, entreating her to grant him an interview in the garden at twilight; but Susanna, remembering Marcellina's hints, received him coldly, and begged him to leave her. The Count, however, was not to be so easily repulsed, and was about to snatch a kiss, when he suddenly heard the voice of old Basilio, the mischief-making music-master, asking for him without; and not wishing to be discovered, even by his confederate, in such a compromising situation, he hastily sought a hiding-place, and rushed towards the very same chair behind which Cherubino was

already concealed. The sprightly page, however, saw him coming, and in a twinkling he adroitly slipped round to the other side and ensconced himself in the seat of the chair, just as the Count crouched behind.

Susanna, trembling at the narrow escape she had had, hastily flung a dress over the curled-up form of Cherubino; and no sooner had she done so, than Basilio entered the room. The old scandal-monger had come to draw from Susanna all she knew of Cherubino's love for his mistress; and in spite of the waiting-maid's indignant denials and frantic efforts to stop him, he declared that the page's infatuation was the talk of the whole household.

Now, Count Almaviva, though frequently engaging in love intrigues himself, was extremely jealous where the honour of his Countess was involved; and furious at Basilio's words, he sprang from behind the chair, and at the same moment discovered the

hapless page in the seat.

The Count, now doubly jealous, imagining that Cherubino had also been making love to Susanna, began to pour forth abuse on them both, and declared that Figaro should be told of his bride-elect's duplicity; but Susanna, assured of Figaro's trust in her, pleaded only for Cherubino's pardon, slyly reminding her master that the page had overheard his words of love to her, and should on that account be conciliated. Almaviva, thus compelled to admit the prudence of such a course, then agreed to pardon Cherubino, but only on condition that he set off immediately for military service, to command a company in the Count's own regiment; and the page was ordered to start for Seville at once.

Meanwhile, the Countess Almaviva had also been told of her husband's infatuation for the waiting-maid; and knowing that Susanna was too faithful to betray her, she bade the girl fetch Figaro to her boudoir, that the three might concoct a plot by means of which her husband should be exposed, and,

thus cured of engaging in such intrigues, be led

back to the arms of his still loving wife.

Figaro's keen wit soon furnished a scheme, and he said that he would send an anonymous letter to the Count, informing him that the Countess intended to grant a secret interview to a certain gallant at the revels to be held that night, which would rouse his jealousy to such a pitch that, whilst endeavouring to prove his suspicions, the wedding could take place before he had time to prevent it. He also suggested that, to entangle him further, Susanna should grant the Count the twilight meeting in the garden he had asked for, but that Cherubino, who had not yet departed, should take her place, dressed in her garments; and then the Countess should surprise the pair, and compel the Count, after thus discovering him in an intrigue, to sue for pardon and return to her affections.

The Countess gladly agreed to this plan, and Figaro, having despatched the letter to the Count by the hands of Basilio, sent the page to the boudoir to be dressed for his part. Cherubino, delighted to be once more in the company of his beloved mistress, readily entered into the plot, and Susanna, after locking the door to prevent interruption, began to dress him in a gown and head-dress of her own, the page's fresh complexion and curling hair helping to make the disguise more complete.

But just as Susanna had gone into an inner room to look for a ribbon, the Count himself knocked at the boudoir door, and finding it locked became suspicious and demanded to have it opened. Full of terror Cherubino ran to hide in a dress cupboard, which the Countess hastily locked, placing the key in her pocket; and then she admitted the Count, who was rendered more suspicious than ever on observing

her confused looks.

Remembering the anonymous letter he had just received, he declared that she had a lover hidden within the cupboard, having heard a sound of shuffling from its depths; and when the Countess tremblingly announced that it was only Susanna, who had retired there, interrupted in the act of trying on a new dress, he angrily called on the maid to answer to her name. Cherubino, however, kept silence, and Susanna, who had returned unobserved and was now hidden behind a curtain, dared not speak. The Count now felt that his suspicions were confirmed, and, in a storm of jealousy, he dragged off the Countess to get tools to break open the cupboard, first locking the doors of the boudoir and inner chamber so that the captive should not escape.

As soon as they had gone, Susanna rushed to the cupboard and unfastened the door with a duplicate key she carried in her pocket, and Cherubino rushed wildly out, freed of his borrowed garments, which he had hastily discarded. Finding all the exits locked, he opened the window and sprang lightly into the garden below; and Susanna, having assured herself that he had come to no harm, took his place in the cupboard, fastening the door on the inside

just as the Count and Countess returned.

The Count had brought tools to break open the cupboard lock, but the Countess, seeing that he was in earnest, produced the key, and in despair opened the door herself. A sigh of relief and wonder escaped her as Susanna stepped forth; and the Count, dumbfounded and ashamed of his suspicion, instantly sought pardon of his wife. However, remembering the letter he had received, he asked what it meant, and the Countess told him that it had been written by Figaro at her orders to provoke jealousy. But on Figaro himself entering at that moment to announce that the wedding guests were assembling, the Count decided to test the truth of this statement, and showing him the letter, he asked if he knew anything about it. The valet, not knowing that his master had been told the truth, at first denied all knowledge of it, and it was not until after sundry meaning glances from the Countess, and saucy pinches from Susanna, that he guessed his mistake,

and admitted writing the note.

The situation might now have been saved had not old Antonio, the gardener, just then entered with several broken flower-pots in his hands, which he tearfully declared had been smashed by a man whom he had seen jump from the window of the boudoir into the very midst of them only a few minutes ago; and the Count's suspicions were quickly roused again.

But Figaro, warned by the distracted looks of the Countess and Susanna, immediately announced that it was he who had made the leap, explaining that he had been waiting for Susanna, when, on hearing his master's angry voice, he had become alarmed, remembering the letter he had written, and had jumped from the window to escape his presence.

This explanation, however, did not satisfy the Count, who still felt that he was being deceived; and when, a few minutes later, Dr Bartolo and Marcellina entered, having been awaiting this opportunity in the ante-room, he gladly listened to the charge they brought against Figaro. Marcellina produced the contract signed by the valet, both she and Dr Bartolo declaring that it proved a promise of marriage, and money lent; and the Count announced that his lawyer should attend to the matter at once, thus hoping, in his pique, to delay, or prevent, the marriage of Figaro and Susanna.

He was delighted when, a little later, Don Curzio, his lawyer, after reading the document, announced that it was legally binding, and that Figaro must either immediately pay back the money lent, or marry Marcellina, according to his agreement; for he knew that Figaro, being of an extravagant disposition, could certainly not produce the large sum

of money named.

The Countess and Susanna were distracted at this decision, and Figaro indignantly declared that he could not be married against his will without the

sanction of his parents, whom he believed were of high birth. When asked to produce his noble parents, he admitted that he knew not who they were, having been stolen from his home by gipsies when a little child; and he added that the only clue to his identity he now possessed was a private mark that had been made upon his arm in the form of a

spatula.

On learning this, Marcellina uttered a cry of surprise and joy, and next moment she clasped Figaro in her arms, declaring that he was her own dear son, whom she had lost years ago, and whose arm had been marked with a spatula in his infancy. It now transpired that this was the truth, Figaro indeed being the son born of an amour between Marcellina and Dr Bartolo; and since the worthy doctor announced that he should now marry his old housekeeper and recognise her son as his heir, the Count felt that his scheme of revenge had crumbled to pieces.

Figaro and Susanna were overjoyed to find that there was no further bar to their union; and the Count, very much against his will, gave orders that their wedding should take place that evening after all, and high revels be held. The rustic guests had already assembled, and during the afternoon dancing and merry-making began with much spirit in

the park.

Now, Cherubino had not yet departed for Seville, being determined to remain at the Castle at least so long as the revels lasted; and having induced his pretty sweetheart, Barbarina, to deck him in feminine garments once more, he joined in a procession of rustic maidens, who presently came to offer flowers to the Countess.

Barbarina introduced him as her cousin, who had come to see the wedding; and the Countess, greatly taken with the pretty looks of the pretended maiden, kissed him playfully on the forehead, to the inward delight of the saucy page. At this moment, how-

ever, the Count appeared with old Antonio, the gardener, who, having picked up Cherubino's hat in his cottage, had discovered the ruse, and brought his master to the scene to unmask the young scapegrace; and the Countess, disconcerted on hearing that she had kissed Cherubino in mistake for a girl, now thought it best to admit to the Count that it was indeed the page who had jumped from her boudoir that morning, and that she and Susanna had been dressing him to take part in a jest they

had planned.

The Count angrily dismissed the crestfallen page; and then, turning to Figaro, who was just approaching, he sternly demanded what he meant by stating that he had jumped from the boudoir window, when Cherubino had now confessed that it was he himself who had performed that feat. But Figaro's ready wit prevented him from being at a loss, and he answered instantly that the statement only proved that they had both had the same fancy to leap through the window, which was not strange, since it was well known that great wits jumped together. He then ran off to join in a merry dance that was just commencing, and the Count was left to the perplexing thought that he was still being fooled.

Nor was the Countess satisfied; for although the bride and bridegroom elect were now happy and likely to gain their ends, she felt that her own pur-

pose had not yet been achieved.

So, presently, she sought Susanna to arrange another plot with her, and between them the pair agreed that Susanna should now grant the Count the interview he had asked of her earlier in the day, but that the Countess should take her place. Susanna wrote a seductive little note to her master, appointing a meeting at twilight in a certain quiet glade; and this she gave to Barbarina to deliver to the Count, who was delighted at receiving it, thinking that Susanna meant to accept him as a lover after all.

Now, it happened that Figaro met Barbarina on her return from the Count, and gathered from her conversation that Susanna intended to meet her infatuated master that evening; and knowing nothing of the new plot that had been made, he imagined that she had been deceiving him all along, and jealously determined to watch her.

When twilight fell, the Countess and Susanna exchanged garments, and hastened to the secluded glade agreed upon, where Susanna presently retired beneath the trees, leaving her mistress in the open; and here they were immediately seen by Figaro, who

was already hiding in the bushes.

By the merest chance, Cherubino, who had not yet departed, had also made an appointment in this same spot with little Barbarina, and seeing, as he imagined, Susanna approaching, he thought he might as well pass the waiting time by a little playful flirtation with the pretty lady's-maid. So, approaching the trembling Countess, whom he addressed as Susanna, he began to make pretty speeches to her, and even tried to snatch a kiss; but at that moment the Count suddenly appeared on the scene, and, boxing his ears smartly, made him beat a hasty retreat.

Also, mistaking in the twilight, the Countess for Susanna, Almaviva began to make love to her, and presently led her towards a summer pavilion; and then Susanna came out into the open once more, having caught sight of Figaro crouching amongst the

bushes.

The angry valet, full of wild jealousy at the scene he had just witnessed, also emerged from his hiding-place, and began to pour forth his woes to the approaching lady, whom he imagined to be the Countess; but upon Susanna revealing herself, he was joyfully relieved, and readily agreed to assist in her plan.

So when the Count shortly afterwards appeared alone, having left the pavilion for a few minutes to

reconnoitre, Figaro fell on his knees before the pretended Countess, and began to make violent protestations of love for her; and immediately the Count, rendered madly jealous at beholding what he supposed to be a clandestine meeting between his wife and a strange lover, rushed forward furiously, calling aloud for his attendants in the adjacent garden to seize the offender.

However, on discovering that the whole affair had been a hoax, his anger quickly evaporated; and realising that his wife had got the better of him, having detected him in an actual intrigue, he humbly besought her pardon when she presently emerged

from the pavilion.

This was readily granted by the Countess, who had been delighted to learn from her husband's wild outburst of jealousy that he still loved her in spite of his propensity for flirtation, of which she hoped she had at last cured him; and since the mysteries and perplexities of the day had now been cleared away, all the plotters returned gaily to the castle, where the marriage ceremony of Figaro and Susanna at once took place amidst great rejoicings.

DON JUAN

(Don Giovanni)

Ir was night-time in Seville. A few distant lights were still calmly reflected in the peaceful river; but in the splendid palace of Don Pedro, the Commandant, darkness and silence reigned, for all the household had retired to rest. In the courtyard without, a stream of pale moonlight fell, outlining the stately building with ghostly clearness, and making the long dark shadows even deeper and more sombre still; and all was so quiet that not a sound was to be heard save the soft swaying of the trees

when a stray breeze gently caught them.

Yet within the shadows, a man was crouching, vainly trying to find rest upon a hard stone seat, and though inwardly fretting and fuming, he did not betray his presence even by a sigh. For Leporello, confidential body-servant to Don Juan, the handsomest and most licentious cavalier in the whole of Seville, was quite used to midnight vigils, and many a dozen times had he kept watch in the chilly gloom without the walls of some fair lady's dwelling, whilst his gay, libertine master enjoyed a secret amour within. Usually, the pair afterwards departed as quietly as they had come; but to-night this was not to be.

Suddenly, the stillnesss of the night was broken by loud shrieks coming from within the building, and next moment Don Juan rushed from the palace out into the moonlit courtyard, closely pursued by a beautiful lady. This lady was Don Pedro's only daughter, the fair young Donna Anna, who,

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discovering a strange cavalier in her chamber, had fled from him with shrieks of alarm; but when the intruder, fearing that her cries would arouse the household, had retreated to the courtyard, her courage had returned, and she had pursued him in order to discover his identity. She caught up with the retreating cavalier in the courtyard, and dragging at the dark cloak that enveloped him, endeavoured vainly to scan his hidden features.

However, Don Juan roughly shook her off; but ere he had time to escape over the wall, Don Pedro, the Commandant, attracted thither by his daughter's shrieks, hastened out into the courtvard, with a

drawn sword in his hand.

Quickly grasping the situation, the Commandant furiously challenged the intruder to combat, determined to defend the honour of his beloved child to his utmost. Don Juan, finding that there was no other escape for him, quickly crossed swords with his assailant; and, being a fatal adept in such encounters, he soon stretched Don Pedro dead at his feet.

The servant Leporello, who had prudently remained in hiding during the whole scene, now came from the shadows, and the pair hastily made their escape over the wall.

Meanwhile, Donna Anna had rushed back to the palace to bring assistance to her father; but when, on returning to the courtyard with her betrothed lover, Don Octavio, and several sleepy servants, she found that her beloved parent was already dead, she uttered a terrible shriek, and fell fainting upon his prostrate body.

Full of grief, Don Octavio gently restored the poor girl to consciousness once more, comforting her with tender words and bidding her regard him as her protector; and then, as the servants bore the dead Commandant back to the palace, Anna implored her betrothed to swear that he would aid her in bringing vengeance upon the murderer of her father.

Gladly Don Octavio gave his word; and there, in the courtyard beneath the moonlit sky, the lovers registered their solemn yow.

Meanwhile, Don Juan and his servant had escaped to a lonely inn on the borders of his own estate, which lay just outside the walls of the city; and next morning, the gay cavalier, hardened by long indulgence in vice, and utterly regardless of the crime he had committed the night before, came jauntily forth into the courtyard, thinking only of conquests still in store for him. In was in vain that Leporello, who occasionally had qualms of conscience, warned his master that his evil course would sooner or later bring fell disaster upon him; for Don Juan cared not for the consequences of his sins, so long as he could satisfy his inborn craving for evil pleasure.

So, on coming forth from the inn, and seeing a veiled and cloaked lady, evidently a traveller, in the courtyard, he withdrew with Leporello behind some trees to watch her unobserved. As the lady drew near, she wrung her hands in distress, and from a few incoherent sentences uttered as she passed, the hidden watchers gathered that she had been abandoned by some false lover whom she angrily sought, in order to avenge herself upon him.

Don Juan now stepped forward with his usual gallant air, and accosted her; but as the young lady flung back her veil, he recognised, to his dismay, the features of a beautiful lady of Burgos, Donna Elvira, whom he had but recently betrayed and cast aside.

Instantly recognising the recreant lover who had so cruelly abandoned her, Donna Elvira began to pour forth bitter reproaches upon him; but Don Juan, callously familiar with such scenes, pushed forward Leporello, bidding him explain matters to the lady.

Then, as Donna Elvira eagerly approached the servant for his explanation, the heartless cavalier slyly made his escape; and when the poor lady presently turned impatiently from the vapid string of

empty words uttered pompously by the experienced Leporello, she found that her expected prey had vanished. Bidding her be of good comfort, since she was neither the first nor the last of his master's numberless victims, Leporello now produced a book from his pocket, in which he had written the names of all the fair maidens who had been basely deceived in similar fashion; and having thus proved that she shared her abandoned position with many others, the servant suddenly took to his heels and ran away down the country road that led to Don Juan's estate.

For a few minutes, Elvira remained stunned, for she had loved Don Juan with her whole heart, willingly yielding herself to his embraces and insinuating temptations, and trusting fondly to his false promises; but now, dishonoured, betrayed, abandoned, she at last saw him in his true colours—a heartless libertine. Full of grief and rage, she determined to avenge herself for her outraged affections and ruined life; and knowing that her betrayer's residence was in the neighbourhood, she hurried along the road taken by Leporello.

When Don Juan arrived at his palace he found that great revels were being held by the peasants on the estates, in honour of the betrothal of a pair of rustic lovers; and seeing that the bride-elect, Zerlina, was an extremely pretty maiden, the gay lord of the soil

determined to amuse himself with her.

Consequently, when Leporello presently arrived (having taken a short cut from the road), he bade him conduct all the peasants immediately to the palace, and entertain them with feasting and dancing within the banquet-hall and garden, whispering an injunction to keep the future bridegroom, Masetto, specially occupied.

As the merry rustics, eager for such an unexpected treat, trooped away willingly to the palace, Don Juan detained the pretty Zerlina, and putting his arm round her waist and whispering honeyed words

of admiration and flattery, endeavoured to lead

her aside to a secluded woodland glade.

The simple Zerlina, accustomed only to the clumsy love-making of a rustic clown, was greatly impressed by the ardent glances and sweet persuasive caresses of the great lord; and when Don Juan, declaring passionately that she should become his bride and never be wed to the boor, Masetto, presently led her to a small summer pavilion which he said should be her home, she gave way to the dazzling charm of the moment, and suffered herself to be led away with a beating heart.

But just at this moment, Donna Elvira, who, having found her way into the grounds, had watched and overheard the whole of this pretty scene, rushed forward, and dragging Zerlina to one side, explained to her that Don Juan was but an evil deceiver, who meant to ruin her. Zerlina, now full of horror, shrank back ashamed, and Elvira, throwing a glance of scorn at the faithless gallant, put a protecting arm round the frightened girl, and drew

her gently away.

As the discomfited Don Juan turned angrily aside, he encountered a lady in deep mourning and a cavalier, who had just entered the grounds; and as he greeted them, he saw, to his dismay, that they were Donna Anna and her betrothed, Don Octavio. However, Anna did not at first recognise in him her father's midnight slayer; and having come with her lover to ask Don Juan's help in finding the villain who had brought such misery upon her, the pair quickly made known their quest, and the double-dealing cavalier promised to give them his aid.

But whilst they were thus talking together, Donna Elvira returned, and declaring earnestly to the two strangers that Don Juan was a false villain, implored them not to place any faith in his promises. Don Juan, coolly announcing that Elvira was a madwoman, pretended to try and soothe her frenzy; but

the poor lady, stung by this fresh outrage, reiterated her knowledge of his sins, and then, fearing she

would not be believed, hurried away.

Don Juan, glad to escape, followed her by another path, saying that he wished to see she did herself no harm; and when he had gone, Donna Anna, who had been watching him constantly, declared to her betrothed that she now knew it was Don Juan who had been her would-be ravisher, and the murderer of her beloved father, since his agitated voice and angry gestures when disturbed by Elvira

had betrayed him.

Full of horror that they had thus unwittingly sought help from the very villain they wished to punish, the lovers hurried after the retreating Elvira, whom they soon overtook; and after having listened to the sad story she had to tell of herself, the three determined to bring retribution on Don Juan, and to begin their scheme by exposing him as a villain before his own assembled guests that night. Having returned to the inn, they disguised themselves in long black dominoes and half-masks; and then when darkness fell they made their way back to the palace grounds, where they were soon seen by Leporello and invited to enter the great hall.

Meanwhile, the sly Leporello had also enticed back the timid Zerlina to the revels, and more than once Don Juan had tried to draw her away with him. But the rustic lover, Masetto, was jealous and suspicious of the great lord's attentions to his pretty sweetheart; and several times during the afternoon he had lain in wait behind bushes and stepped out in time to prevent a stolen interview. Zerlina tried to soothe him with her pretty coaxing ways, feeling that her high-born cavalier merely admired her, and meant her no harm; but later on she was

undeceived.

The revels were to end in a masked ball at night, and as soon as darkness fell, the delighted peasants, all decked in dominoes and masks, trooped gaily

into the palace once more, to dance and feast in the banquet-hall.

Don Juan, gorgeously attired, moved authoritatively about the gilded salons, ordering every kind of comfort and delight for his lively guests; but all the while he kept a watchful eye upon the pretty Zerlina, determined to gratify his sudden passion for her that evening. At last his opportunity occurred; and having bidden Leporello keep Masetto occupied for a short time, he secured Zerlina for a partner in the dance, and in its mazy movements sought to draw her into a private inner room.

Donna Anna and her two companions watched this manœuvre with anger in their hearts; and when Don Juan's fell purpose presently became patent to all, they pulled off their masks and denounced him before his own guests as a base villain, relating the

many evil things they knew of him.

Masetto, now roused to fury, rushed boldly forward to attack his enemy, calling on his friends to help him; but Don Juan quickly drew his sword, and clearing a way for himself, managed to make

his escape.

Seeing that their prey had slipped through their grasp once more, Donna Anna and her betrothed returned to the city; and shortly afterwards Elvira also took up her abode in Seville, hiring a house,

and taking Zerlina with her as her maid.

Here, however, as the weeks went on, they were again discovered by the irrepressible Don Juan; and, still determined to carry on his amour with the pretty peasant girl, the gay cavalier repaired one dark evening to the courtyard of Elvira's house, where he hastily exchanged outer garments with his servant, Leporello.

When Elvira presently appeared at an open window, Don Juan from the darkness below called softly to her, declaring that he loved her yet, and begging her to come down and receive his caresses once more. The susceptible Elvira, who still loved

her false sweetheart in spite of her better judgment, could not long resist this tender invitation, and presently came out into the courtyard, and fell into the arms of Leporello, who, wrapped in his master's cloak and hat, she mistook for Don Juan.

Then, taking fright at a noise purposely made by the real Don Juan, she allowed herself to be hurried out into the street beyond by the disguised Leporello.

Having thus secured the courtyard to himself, Don Juan began to sing a serenade to Zerlina, whom he knew was within the house; but he was almost immediately set upon by Masetto and a party of rustics, who had been closely following on his track

ever since the night of the ball.

However, seeing that his assailants quickly recognised Leporello's garments and regarded him as the servant, Don Juan kept up the pretence, and professing sympathy with their cause, soon sent the rustics off in another direction on a wild-goose chase after their enemy; and then, having enticed Masetto to remain behind under pretence of inspecting his weapons, he presently struck the poor peasant a stunning blow and rushed off leaving him helpless on the ground.

Zerlina, attracted by the noise, now came forth from the house and helped the fallen man to rise; and recognising her lover with joy, she comforted him as best she could and afterwards accompanied him down the street in search of his companions.

Meanwhile, Elvira and the disguised Leporello had sought refuge in the courtyard outside the house of Donna Anna; and here they were presently discovered by Anna herself, who came out from the building to walk in the cool evening air with her betrothed, Don Octavio. Leporello tried to escape, but being met at the entrance by Masetto and Zerlina, who were passing at that moment, he was immediately set upon by them, and in order to protect himself, was compelled to reveal his true identity.

It was now evident to Donna Anna and her lover

that Don Juan was still in the neighbourhood, and as they had already proved him to be the midnight assassin of the Commandant, Don Octavio declared that he would at once seek out the officers of Justice, and seize the base cavalier in his own palace that

very night.

When Don Octavio had hurried away to carry out this purpose, Leporello tried to make his escape; but he was seen by Zerlina, who quickly pursued and caught him, owing him a grudge for having, as she supposed, belaboured her lover. Flourishing before him a razor she had secured from Donna Anna's palace, she bade him sit down in a stone seat near by; and when, in fear for his life, he had meekly done so, she firmly bound him hand and foot to the seat, and left him in a sorry plight.

For some time Leporello writhed and struggled vainly to free himself; but at length, to his joy, a peasant came by, and in answer to his cries, cut the

cords that bound him.

Full of aches and pains, Leporello went off in search of his master, whom he found in an open square before the Cathedral of Seville, and approaching him with a woeful limp, declared to the waiting cavalier in aggrieved tones that he had been half-killed in his service.

Don Juan, however, only laughed at him, and being in a very gay mood, immediately began to tell his grumbling servant of several other lively adventures he had just experienced in pursuit of

pretty maidens.

Now, in the centre of the square a splendid equestrian statue in marble had already been erected to the memory of the late Commandant, Don Pedro, bearing upon its pedestal the following inscription:

"I HEREWITH AWAIT THE VENGEANCE DECREED BY HEAVEN UNTO THE WRETCH WHO SLEW ME!"

Whilst Don Juan was in the midst of his gay story, a sound of muffled words seemed to come from

the Statue; and Leporello, full of terror, fell on his knees, trembling. Don Juan, however, bade him read out the inscription on the pedestal; and when the frightened servant had done so, he next gaily bade him invite the Statue to his palace for supper

that night.

But, overcome by superstitious fears, Leporello could not find courage to do so, and it was not until his master threatened to thrust his sword through him that he at length uttered aloud the invitation he had been bidden to give. The Statue immediately bowed its head in response to the invitation, to the increasing alarm of Leporello, who uttered a loud shriek; but Don Juan, laughingly declaring that the Statue's movement was only fancy, dragged the quaking servant away, and repaired at once to his palace.

It so happened that the gay cavalier was indeed holding a splendid supper party that night, having invited a number of beautiful ladies to feast with him; and on arriving at the palace, he found his guests already assembled. He joined them at the table at once, whilst Leporello began to wait on the party; and in a short time the palace was filled with

the sounds of music and revelry.

But suddenly, in the very midst of the feast, Donna Elvira appeared in the banquet-hall; for, still having a spark of love left in her heart for her false lover, she had come to warn him of his approaching danger, and to entreat him to repent whilst he still had time. But Don Juan, now recklessly hilarious, only laughed aloud at her entreaties; and Elvira, full of angry despair, declared she should now leave him to his fate.

But just as she reached the door she uttered a terrific shriek, which was quickly taken up by others near the entrance; for coming up the stairs with heavy, measured tread, they saw the Statue of the late Don Pedro, on foot, with a fierce look of righteous wrath upon its marble face! Full of terror, the ladies fled from the room, whilst Leporello hid beneath the supper-table; and when the Statue presently entered the banquet-hall, all the lights suddenly burnt dim, and gradually went out altogether.

Don Juan stared at his strange visitor in utter astonishment, and demanded its business; and when the Statue of the Commandant replied in sepulchral tones that it had come to the feast in answer to his own invitation, the gay host attempted to regain his self-possession, and ordered Leporello to lay the table afresh.

But as Leporello crawled forth from his hidingplace, the Statue declared that, as its spirit dwelt in Heaven, it needed not mortal food; and turning to Don Juan, it said: "Thou badst me to thy banquet, and I, in turn, now invite thee to mine! Wilt come?"

Leporello implored his master to refuse; but Don Juan, scorning to show fear, recklessly accepted at once, and took the outstretched hand of his visitor in pledge of the compact. But when the icy-cold fingers of the Statue closed on his own in a grip like that of a vice, a shiver of intense fear passed through the whole frame of the cavalier; and feeling that his last hour had come, he struggled vainly to free himself. But the Statue only held him the tighter, and in deep, solemn tones, bade him repent, ere Heaven's sentence was passed upon him.

But Don Juan, though full of mortal fear, scorned repentance, and in spite of the entreaties of Leporello, and the further injunctions of the Statue, still passionately shrieked out his defiance. Then the Statue in an appalling voice declared that his doom was passed, and letting its victim's hand drop, it suddenly sank through the flooring into the ground below.

At the same moment, fierce flames sprang up on all sides, and from the deep abyss that had just engulfed the Statue, a host of demons rushed forth and seized Don Juan in their scorching grasp. It was in vain that the wretched man shrieked and struggled in their embrace, for in spite of his frantic efforts to free himself, they quickly overcame him, and sprang back into the fiery abyss, dragging their victim with them.

Then the flames died away, and the chasm closed; and when, next moment, Don Octavio entered with his friends and the officers of Justice, the banquet-

hall had assumed its usual aspect once more.

But justice had already overtaken the offender they sought; and when Leporello presently described in trembling accents the visit of the Commandant's Statue, and the terrible doom that had overtaken his wicked master, all declared that vengeance was satisfied, since the Statue had fulfilled its vow.

Zerlina and Massetto now agreed to be married the very next day; and Donna Anna, since her father's death was at last avenged, smiled upon her faithful lover, and placed her hand in his, declaring that

happiness might now be theirs.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

THERE dwelt at Windsor during the reign of King Henry the Fourth a certain fat, jolly knight named Sir John Falstaff; and in all fair England there was not a merrier old fellow than he. Many were the tales told of his mad escapades in company with gay Prince Hal and his companion Poins; and many a round dozen of mischievous pranks and roguish tricks could be laid to the charge of the fat Knight of Windsor.

As may be readily guessed, one who led such a harum-scarum, careless life was not over-burdened with riches; but although Falstaff lived chiefly by his wits-and, be it admitted, occasionally by the depredations of his three rascally followers, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol-his portly form did not grow less for lack of goodly cheer, neither did his mighty thirst suffer for want of endless cups of sack.

Nevertheless, at one time, the gay old Knight found himself with a more than usually light purse; and appalled at the doleful prospect of restricted conviviality, he presently conceived the brilliant idea of providing himself with a couple of sweethearts, in

order to replenish his fallen fortunes.

He therefore wrote two love-letters, word for word alike, save for the names of the individual charmers, and sent them to two comely housewives of Windsor, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page; and since the husbands of these good dames were prosperous and of good standing, he hoped that his love-making would secure to him many substantial gifts, to say nothing of providing him with a pleasant way of passing his

time, since both the ladies were still sufficiently young and well-favoured to prove attractive subjects for a flirtation. He made the letters as flattering and full of sentimental phrases as he could devise; and in each he finished thus:

"Thine own true knight, By day or night, Or any kind of light, With all his might, For thee to fight. John Falstaff."

When, however, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page received these amorous effusions, and, being friends and confidantes, had compared notes and discovered the letters to be precisely the same, they were at first very indignant that respectable dames should be thus addressed by such a well-known rake as Sir John Falstaff; but, soon guessing the reason for his sudden expression of affection, they set their quick wits to work to hatch a merry plan, whereby they should make the fat old Knight the laughing-stock of the town as a penalty for his audacity.

They therefore determined to make a pretence of encouraging his advances, in order that they might bring on him the anger of their husbands; and with this object in view, they sent a letter to Falstaff, inviting him to visit Mistress Ford at her house next day, informing him that her husband, who was of a very jealous disposition, would then be safely out

of the way.

Meanwhile, other little plots were also afoot in the two households. Mistress Page had a very pretty young daughter, charming Mistress Anne, who had at this time no less than three suitors for her hand. Her father desired her to wed a youth named Slender, who, though foolish and a timid wooer, was rich; whilst her mother favoured a ridiculous and fussy old foreign admirer, one Doctor Caius. But pretty Mistress Anne herself had already fixed her choice

upon a somewhat poor, but handsome young courtier named Fenton, whose sincere love for her she had quickly returned with as deep an affection; and, in spite of the machinations of her father and mother, she was determined to wed none other than he. To her father's choice, she said:

"O, what a world of vile ill-favour'd faults Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!"

To her mother's choice, she said:

"Good mother, do not marry me to yond' fool!"

But to her own beloved Fenton, she said:

"I am yours for evermore!"

In the Ford household, too, another plot was brewing; for Master Ford, having heard from Falstaff's servant, Pistol (who had now conceived a spite against his fat master), that the reprobate Knight was carrying on a desperate flirtation with Mistress Ford, his jealousy was quickly roused, so that he set about making plans for exposing the pair.

When the amorous old Knight appeared at Mistress Ford's house at the appointed time, he was enthusiastically received by the lively dame, who pretended to accept his advances with every sign of favour; but very soon after his arrival, Mistress Page entered the room in haste, and with simulated fear announced that Master Ford was approaching in a great rage, accompanied by Master Page and a number of other friends, all bent on dragging forth the lover whom they believed to be in the house.

Falstaff, in a great fright, eagerly begged for protection, having no desire to meet the jealous husband; and the two women quickly hid the timid Knight in a huge buck-basket—a receptacle for dirty clothes—which they had set ready for the purpose, stuffing his portly form in amongst the soiled linen.

Then, covering him over with a cloth, they called two serving-men, to whom they gave instructions to carry the basket away to the meadow washingground, bidding them also in an undertone to

tumble the contents into the river close by.

As the servants departed with the wash-basket, Ford entered, full of jealous fury, declaring that his wife had her lover hidden in the house; but after vainly searching for the ponderous Knight, he was greatly mystified, and determined to pay a visit to Falstaff in disguise, in order to learn his

plans.

Meanwhile, the would-be lover had received a very unexpected ducking in the river; but though this unpleasant experience damped his ardour for the time being, he soon grew enthusiastic again next morning, as he sat with his boon companions in the Garter Inn, quaffing deep draughts of sack, and rejoicing over a second letter from Mistress Ford, in which she invited him to visit her again that day,

as her husband would be out a-hawking.

Just as he finished singing a jovial song in praise of good wine, Master Ford entered in disguise; and introducing himself by the name of Brooks, asked Falstaff to help him in a love affair, declaring that he had fallen in love with the charming Mistress Ford, but was too timid to plead his own suit. He offered the Knight a fat purse for needful expenses; and Falstaff, nothing loath, accepted this unexpected windfall with great alacrity, boasting that he could easily arrange the matter, since he would be seeing Mistress Ford that day.

Ford then retired, having thus gained the information he needed; and Falstaff departed to keep his appointment with Mistress Ford, who again received him with pretended favour. Very soon, however, as again arranged between the two friends, Mistress Page interrupted the roguish old Knight's lovemaking by rushing into the room with the news that Master Ford was returning in a greater rage

than ever, declaring that if he could catch his wife's

lover this time he would certainly kill him.

These alarming words put Falstaff into a woeful trembling, and he sought wildly for a hiding-place. This time the two dames quickly hustled him into an upper chamber, bidding him don the clothes of a certain fat old fortune-telling woman of Brentford, whom they had invited for this very purpose.

Whilst Mistress Page hastily arrayed Sir John in the fortune-teller's gown, Mistress Ford endeavoured to persuade her irate husband not to search the house, as he wildly insisted upon doing; and she declared that no other stranger was there save the Fat Woman of Brentford, who happened to be visiting her that

day.

This, as the wily dame expected, roused Ford's wrath still more, since he had a special dislike for the old fortune-telling hag, whom he had forbidden to enter his house again; and when Falstaff presently appeared in the Fat Woman's gown, he was roughly seized by the angry husband, and treated to a sound cudgelling ere he was permitted to depart.

Both the merry wives were by this time convulsed with laughter at the success of their plan; and they now told their husbands the whole truth of the matter, so that Ford's jealousy quickly vanished, and he sought pardon from his wife for his doubt

of her.

After peace had been thus happily restored, the friends decided to carry the joke a little further still, and to give Falstaff a third scare, as a final penalty for his many misdeeds; and it was arranged that they should lure him to Windsor Forest at midnight, and there lead him to suppose that he was being attacked by fairies, goblins, and other supernatural beings.

Mistress Ford therefore invited her ponderous admirer to meet her in the forest at midnight, promising to lend him a pair of stag's horns for his head, that he might disguise himself as Herne the Hunter, in which garb, if any of the townsfolk should chance to see him, they would quickly run away in terror, looking upon him as a spirit; for at that time there were plenty of superstitious folk to be found who believed in the legend of Herne the Hunter, which was as follows: In an age gone by, a certain famous hunter named Herne had impiously slain a stag beneath the sacred oak tree, which was always regarded as a place of refuge to hunted creatures; and for this misdeed his spirit was condemned to wear the stag's horns and to hunt in the forest at midnight for evermore, accompanied by a phantom train of fellow hunters and dogs.

It was arranged that pretty Mistress Anne should appear in the forest arrayed as the Fairy Queen, accompanied by a troop of children disguised as elves and gnomes; and Page, Ford, Slender, Doctor Caius, and Fenton would also appear as various other unearthly beings to assist in the teasing and torment-

ing of Falstaff.

Master Page and his wife, unknown to each other, also determined to use this masquerade as a means for carrying out their opposing wishes with regard to their daughter's marriage. So Anne was first secretly commanded by her father to wear a red gown, that she might thus be recognised by Slender, who meant to run away with her, that they might be married that night by the priest at Eton; and soon afterwards she was stealthily desired by her mother to don a green robe, that she might be noted by Doctor Caius, with whom the crafty dame had arranged a similar elopement.

But merry Mistress Anne herself decided to wear bridal white garments, arranging with her beloved Fenton that he would know her thus, and could slip away with her to the priest at Eton before the other suitors could find her; and in order to complete the confusion, she directed Slender to wear a green robe and Dr Caius a red one in the masquerade, that they might thus run away with each other in mistake for

herself.

On the appointed evening, Falstaff, disguised as Herne the Hunter, appeared under the Sacred Oak in Windsor Forest at midnight; and very soon after Mistress Ford and Mistress Page appeared also. The two merry dames, enjoying the joke immensely, encouraged the fat Knight in his extravagant and absurd love-making; but presently, hearing weird noises, and seeing strange forms approaching, they pretended to be terrified, and fled away shrieking, leaving the frightened Falstaff sprawling on the ground, for, in attempting to run away also, he had tripped and fallen.

The prostrate Knight was instantly surrounded by the band of pretended fairies, gnomes, and sprites; and pretty Mistress Anne, attired in a flowing white

robe as Titania, drew near, and sang:

Fairies, black, grey, green, and white, You moonshine revellers, and shades of night, You orphan heirs of fixed destiny, Attend your office and your quality. About, about; Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out: Strew good luck, ouphes, on every sacred room! That it may stand till the perpetual doom, In state as wholesome, as in state 'tis fit Worthy the owner, and the owner it. The several chairs of order look you scour With juice of balm, and every precious flower: Each fair instalment, coat, and sev'ral crest, With loyal blazon evermore be bless'd! And nightly, meadow fairies, look, you sing, Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring: Th' expressure that it bears, green let it be, More fertile-fresh than all the field to see; And Honi soit qui mal y pense, write, In emrold tuffs, flowers purple, blue, and white: Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery, Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee: Fairies use flowers for their charactery. Away; disperse: But till 'tis one o'clock, Our dance of custom, round about the oak Of Herne the Hunter, let us not forget!

As Falstaff listened to these words, he was filled with alarm, believing that he was indeed surrounded by supernatural beings; and sharing the common superstitious notion that it was death to look upon or speak to the fairies, he buried his face in his hands, and lay still upon the ground, hoping they would presently vanish.

But the supposed Fairy Queen now sang out a

further command:

About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme; And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time! Pinch him, fairies, mutually, Pinch him for his villainy; Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about, Till candles, and starlight, and moonshine be out!

At this command, her lively followers all set upon Falstaff, pinching him, and pricking him with their toy darts, uttering strange wild cries, and indulging in loud peals of eldritch laughter; and the tormented Knight, not daring to stir, and fearing he knew not what, soon began to bellow for mercy.

Whilst this ludicrous scene was progressing, Fenton, in the guise of Oberon, drew near to Anne, whom he recognised by her white gown, and taking her by the hand, hurried away with her to Eton, where the priest they had notified quickly married them; and Slender and Dr Caius, the one in green and the other in red, also joined hands, and slipped away together, each believing the other to be Mistress Anne, in accordance with the directions given them by the supporters of their suits.

When the merry wives were fully satisfied that their corpulent and audacious admirer had received a sufficiently severe pinching, and thorough scare to teach him not to make love to respectable married dames again, they set him free, and revealed the true identity of the weird company of tormentors; and when all had enjoyed a hearty laugh at the old reprobate's expense, in which the jolly Falstaff, bearing no malice, readily joined, the masquerade

came to an end.

Then, to the amazement of Master Page and his wife, Slender and Doctor Caius both appeared, full of blustering wrath at the trick which had been played upon them by saucy Mistress Anne, and which they had not discovered until they had reached Eton; and whilst the disappointed suitors were bewailing their loss, the two arch-plotters, Fenton and Anne, arrived also on the scene, and confessing their successful ruse, sued for pardon.

This was readily granted by the parents, who good-humouredly admitted that they had been outwitted by these determined lovers; and Page remarked:

Well, what remedy? Fenton, Heaven give thee joy! What cannot be eschew'd must be embrac'd!

And Falstaff merrily added:

When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased!

But Ford said:

In love, the heavens themselves do guide the State; Money buys land, and wives are sold by fate!

After this, the whole party trooped back to Master Page's house, to enjoy a wedding feast; and in deep draughts of his favourite beverage, Falstaff quickly drowned all remembrance of the teasing he had received at the hands of the Merry Wives of Windsor.

THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

(Les Contes d'Hoffmann)

One evening during the early years of the last century, a gay company of noisy young students were drinking together in Luther's famous wine-cellar at Nuremberg. They had come in for refreshment between the acts of the Opera which was being performed in the adjacent theatre; and all were merry and ready for any revel which might arise, with the exception of one of their number who sat apart, full of gloom and leaning his head upon his hand, lost to his surroundings in a deep reverie of sad thoughts.

This was Hoffmann, the poet and musician, a man somewhat older than the others—a man who, though blessed with handsome looks, exceptional grace of form and manner, and a fascinating charm of personality, was yet prone to frequent fits of despondency, from which his boon companions had the utmost difficulty in arousing him. Not even his greatest friend, Nicklaus, had the power to call up a smile to pierce through the dark clouds of these gloomy spells; and to no one had he yet related the story of the circumstances that had made him the victim of such an unhappy state of mind.

That he had suffered sorely from the onslaughts of more than one deep love-passion, they were well aware, and also suspected that he had been drawn into the meshes of some weird supernatural influence; but though Nicklaus could have enlightened them—knowing all the circumstances of his friend's life—the young students, in spite of their curiosity, re-

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frained from asking questions which might lose them the friendship of one whom they loved dearly.

This evening, however, to their surprise and pleasure, Hoffmann, on being rallied by his companions upon his unusually deep fit of gloom, suddenly roused himself, and offered to tell them the stories of his three unfortunate love episodes; and the students, abandoning the opera for that night, ordered in a fresh bowl of steaming punch and gathered round the handsome Hoffmann, eager to listen to the enthralling tales he had to tell.

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In the first story, Hoffmann appeared as an impressionable and sensitive youth in the throes of a first

boyish love-passion.

Having several times beheld the dainty form of a beautiful maiden standing at the windows of the house of Spallanzani, a famous physiologist, young Hoffmann became so fascinated by her fair looks that he fell in love with her, and eagerly sought an opportunity for declaring his passion; and, with this object in view, he offered himself as a pupil to the scientist, hoping thus to secure an introduction to the charming young lady whom he believed to be Spallanzani's child, since the latter talked continually of his wonderful "daughter," Olympia, speaking always in enthusiastic terms of her many graces, of her clever singing and dancing, and of the grand party he intended to give very shortly in honour of her coming-out.

Now, in reality, Olympia was not a human being at all, but merely a marvellously life-like automaton, made by Spallanzani, who had been assisted in the work by another scientist named Coppelius, a mysterious man who had gained a considerable reputation as a wizard and dabbler in the occult arts; but, seeing that young Hoffmann had no knowledge of the wonderful piece of mechanism they had contrived to make, but believed the latter to be indeed a real flesh-

and-blood maiden, the pair conspired together to keep him in this belief, in order to retain him longer as a pupil, and also to amuse their friends at his expense.

Consequently, they would not permit Hoffmann any closer inspection of Olympia until the night of the party; and the magician, Coppelius, next informed the young man that his sight was bad, and sold to him a pair of specially prepared spectacles through which he knew that the automaton would appear to

him to be indeed a living person.

Coppelius, seeing that a large fortune could probably be made by exhibiting the mechanical figure, now claimed a substantial share in the anticipated profits, he having made half of her body and supplied her with her beautiful eyes; so Spallanzani agreed to buy him out, and to that end gave him a draft on a Jew—knowing the latter to be bankrupt, but craftily concealing the fact from Coppelius, whom he believed was about to depart from the country, and, consequently, would not be likely to discover the fraud until many miles had separated them.

Coppelius, quite unsuspicious, accepted the false draft and departed; and on the same day Spallanzani gave his grand entertainment in honour of the

coming-out of his beautiful "daughter."

When all the guests had arrived, the scientist produced the exquisitely made life-sized doll, dressed daintily in pretty girlish garments; and the automaton, having been wound up beforehand, was led round the ball-room by Spallanzani with great pride, and bowed to the guests, greeting them in clear, bell-like tones, and finally singing to them a fine operatic song, full of such finished trills and flourishes that the audience was astounded by the wonderful performance.

The visitors, of course, knew perfectly well that the figure was merely an automaton; but seeing that young Hoffmann—who was wearing the magic spectacles that caused the doll to appear to him more than ever to be a real human being—thought otherwise, they merrily conspired with Spallanzani to pretend that Olympia was indeed his daughter.

Becoming more and more enamoured of the pretty "maiden," as he gazed admiringly at her through his strange spectacles, Hoffmann was at last completely bewitched by her pink-and-white waxen beauty; and sitting down beside her, he took the first opportunity of their being alone to declare his passion for her, utterly regardless of her stolid attitude, stiff, jerky movements and mechanical replies of "Yes! Yes!" to all he said.

So enraptured was he that he became entirely oblivious of his surroundings, continuing to pour forth tender love speeches into the unheeding ears of the pretty Olympia, to the great amusement of the other guests; and when his friend, Nicklaus, who was also present, tried to enlighten him as to the true state of affairs, he thrust him aside roughly, and devoted himself more assiduously than ever to the unresponsive doll.

When dancing began he immediately engaged her as his partner, lovingly encircling her slender waist with his ready arm; but the doll, having been overwound, now got out of control, and whirled the unfortunate Hoffmann round and round the room at so dizzy a pace that he at length fell to the ground in a swoon, Olympia spinning on alone until finally caught and placed in the laboratory once more.

At this moment, to the dismay of Spallanzani, the wizard, Coppelius, rushed into the house in a towering rage, having discovered the fraud which had been practised upon him and returned to wreak vengeance upon his false partner by destroying the mechanical doll; and hastening to the laboratory, he managed to break the wonderful automaton into little pieces before his brother scientist could prevent him.

Hoffmann awakened to his senses once more whilst the work of destruction was in progress; and his magic spectacles having been broken in his fall, he quickly realised, to his shame and mortification, that he had been in love with a mere lifeless doll, and had made himself a laughing-stock to all who had witnessed his folly. Full of confusion, he rushed from the room, amidst the derisive jeers of the amused guests; and thus ended his first adventure in the realms of Cupid.

A few years later, Hoffmann, now in the first flush of hot-blooded manhood, was to be found in Venice, where his ardent nature revelled in the joyous life of love and warmth to be enjoyed there and the glamour of beauty and sensuous pleasure that drew

him so easily into its magic circle.

Both he and his friend, Nicklaus, were frequent visitors in the luxurious palace of the beautiful courtesan, Guilietta; for Hoffmann had conceived a violent passion for his lovely hostess, stubbornly refusing to believe evil of her, in spite of the warnings of the more prudent Nicklaus, who assured him that she had numerous other lovers and would certainly deceive and cast him aside in the end.

Guilietta, for her own ends, very willingly encouraged the advances of Hoffmann, graciously accepting his eager declarations of love, and even persuading him into the belief that she returned his passion; for the fair courtesan was in the power of a demon-magician calling himself Dapurtutto, who, by his arts, had obtained such mastery over her that at his command and under his influence she had already obtained for him the shadow of Schlemil, one of her lovers, and had now agreed to take the reflection of Hoffmann in a magic mirror he had given her for the purpose—for it was in this way that the demon secured the souls he coveted.

Guilietta therefore encouraged the enraptured Hoffmann to make love to her; and on one of his visits, after a passionately tender scene with him, she carelessly held up the magic mirror and asked him to gaze within it. Unsuspectingly, Hoffmann did so, wondering at the triumphant laugh with which

Guilietta instantly withdrew the mirror; but when Dapurtutto presently appeared and placed another mirror before him, he was horrified to find that it gave back no reflection—a sure sign that magic was at work.

A feeling of uneasiness now came over Hoffmann, a feeling which deepened upon the entry of Schlemil, whom he instantly perceived to be his rival and predecessor in the affections of Guilietta; but the scheming courtesan still led her infatuated victim to believe that she loved him only by telling him to secure the key of her chamber from Schlemil, declaring that the latter had it in his keeping against her will.

She then left her two lovers together, with Dapurtutto; and Hoffmann immediately commanded his rival to give up the key of their hostess's chamber, and upon Schlemil refusing to do so,

furiously challenged him to fight.

The sinister Dapurtutto offered his own sword to the unarmed Hoffmann, not wishing the duel to be delayed; and after a few passes with this uncanny weapon, feeling an evil influence enveloping him, Hoffmann, to his horror, stretched Schlemil dead at his feet.

For a few moments, Hoffmann remained staring at the dead body of his opponent in a half-dazed state; then, looking up, he saw that Dapurlutto had

vanished, and that he was alone.

Then, presently, a gondola passed by the open balcony; and amongst its luxurious cushions lay the faithless Guilietta, already reclining in the arms of Dapurtutto, her new lover, and waving a mocking farewell to the deserted Hoffmann, who now at last realised that his love had been scorned, and that he himself had been the dupe of a fickle, unscrupulous courtesan.

Twice had Hoffmann passed through the fire of passion and been scorched by its flames; and he seemed fated never to be a happy lover, for in his third adventure—in which he experienced the deepest and only real love of his life—dire misfortune awaited him once more.

Hoffmann's ardent nature had deepened and matured with advancing years, as the follies and fancies of early youth dropped away from him; and when, some years after the Venice episode, he fell in love with Antonia, the lovely but frail daughter of Councillor Crespel, his passion was so strong and overwhelming that every fibre of his being thrilled in his beloved one's presence, and when parted from

her the whole world seemed empty.

To his joy, Antonia returned his love; and the pair plighted their troth, against the wishes of Crespel, who, though anxious to secure his daughter's happiness, yet feared that the excitement of so passionate a love would have a disastrous effect upon her delicate health. For Antonia had inherited from her dead mother a glorious gift of song, together with a strong consumptive tendency; and Hoffmann, not knowing of the latter weakness, encouraged the beautiful girl to sing more than was good for her, since he took the greatest delight in her rich voice.

Crespel, therefore, endeavoured to keep the ardent lover away from the house; and having occasion to be absent for a few hours one day, he gave strict instructions to his servant, Franz, not to admit Hoff-

mann, should he happen to call.

Old Franz, however, was deaf, and misunderstood the words of his master; and, consequently, when Hoffmann presently arrived at the door, eagerly inquiring for Antonia, he admitted him with a smile of welcome, saying that his young mistress would be

delighted to receive him.

Next moment, the lovers were in each other's arms; and after some happy talk together, Hoffmann persuaded Antonia to sing to him once again, and the latter, though telling him that her father had forbidden her to use her voice so frequently, gladly agreed to his request, since singing was her greatest delight. During the song, however, she was attacked

by a sudden fit of coughing and weakness, which greatly alarmed Hoffmann; and she had only just recovered herself, when the pair were further startled by hearing the opening of the street door and thus

learning that Crespel had returned.

Hoffmann, not wishing to distress Antonia by an angry scene between her father and himself, quickly concealed himself behind a thick curtain, hoping to make his escape when a favourable opportunity should occur. Antonia retired into an adjoining apartment; and no sooner had Councillor Crespel entered the room in which Hoffmann was concealed, than he was followed by a tall sinister-looking man whom he knew under the name of Dr Mirakel, and whom he hated and distrusted, and was, moreover, mortally afraid of, since he believed him to have been the cause of his wife's early death, and suspected him now to have designs upon the life of his delicate daughter.

This mysterious Dr Mirakel was, in reality, the evil genius of Hoffmann—a demon who had dogged his path throughout his three love-adventures, first as Coppelius, secondly as Dapurtutto, and now as Mirakel—and from the angry scene that followed between the visitor and Crespel, the concealed lover learned, to his grief, the terrible news that his beloved Antonia had a fatal disease, and that her death might be hastened by the exercise of her

wonderful gift of song.

When Crespel finally succeeded in driving Mirakel away from his presence, and had himself retired to another room, the lovers met together once more; and upon Hoffmann now earnestly entreating Antonia to sing no more, she tearfully promised to obey his wishes.

Hoffmann then departed to seek the harassed Crespel to gain his approval and confidence; and no sooner had Antonia been left alone for a moment than the evil Dr Mirakel returned, and representing himself as the friend of her parents, began to chide her for not making more use of her exquisite voice.

On learning that her father and lover had both made her promise not to sing on account of her weak health, the wily demon, not to be outdone, resorted to supernatural means in order to gain his ends; and bidding Antonia gaze upon her mother's portrait which hung upon the wall, he invoked the spirit of the dead woman, whom he caused to speak from the picture and persuade the girl that she was doing grievous wrong by not making use of the precious gift that had been so divinely bestowed upon her.

As her mother's portrait resumed its normal aspect once more, and the sinister Mirakel vanished from the room, Antonia, feeling that she had thus mysteriously received a heavenly command to use her precious gift of song, at once began to sing, quite forgetful of her promise to refrain from such exertion; and her rich voice rose in an exquisite song, the clear bell-like notes ringing through the house in a glorious outburst of passionate feeling such as she

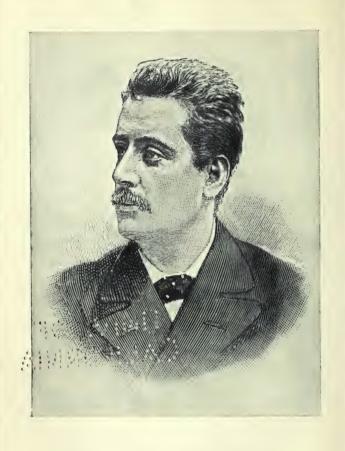
had never given vent to before.

But the effort and unusual exertion were too much for her frail strength to bear; and as Crespel and Hoffmann rushed into the room, attracted by the sound of her wonderful singing, she fell, exhausted to the ground, and, a few moments later, breathed her

last in the arms of her grief-stricken lover.

Such were the adventures of the ever-thwarted, ill-fated Hoffmann in his search for the happiness of love; and as the recital of them came to an end, the unhappy hero buried his head in his hands, and once more plunged in his accustomed deep gloom.

The merry students, however, determined not to allow him to fall back into melancholy that night, at least; and after thanking him for the stories he had related, and commiserating with him in his misfortunes, they called for yet another bowl of punch, which Hoffmann, grateful for their sympathy, now gladly joined them in draining to the bottom.



PUCCINI

MANON LESCAUT

ONE bright summer evening towards the end of the eighteenth century, a merry group of students and idlers were gathered together in the courtyard of an inn at Amiens, near the Paris Gate; and as they there awaited the arrival of the diligence, they passed the time pleasantly in joking, drinking, singing snatches of gay songs and flirting with the pretty work-girls who were just returning from their daily labours, and who were glad enough to join in the merriment of the lively youths, whose favours they very willingly accepted.

One of these students, however, held aloof from the others; for the work-girls' loud jollity had no attraction for his sensitive, poetic nature, and, in spite of being rallied by his companions for his indifference to the girlish charms around him, he stood apart,

wrapped in his own dreamy thoughts.

This fastidious youth was the Chevalier des Grieux, a young man of high birth and good breeding, who was also possessed of a fine, passionate nature and the true artistic temperament which could only be satisfied with the highest in beauty, and art, and love; and though his giddy companions, in their raillery, now declared his gloomy looks portended that he must be a victim to the darts of Cupid, his heart had never yet been touched.

Presently the diligence entered the courtyard, and amongst the passengers who alighted was a beautiful young girl, who was accompanied by her brother and an elderly fop, whose elegantly rich attire and

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lordly airs proclaimed him to be a person of wealth

and importance.

The young girl was Manon Lescaut, a maiden of exquisite loveliness, who, in spite of her extreme youth and beauty, was even now being conducted by her brother to a convent, the life of a nun being the fate destined for her by her parents, who feared that the snares of the world might prove too much for one so fair, whom they believed could only be kept safe from temptation by taking the veil.

Manon, however, had a rich, passionate nature that craved for light, warmth, beauty and all the joys of a happy, full life; and she was sad at the thought that the cup of pleasure which she so ardently desired to drain was to be snatched from her lips

ere she had scarce tasted of it.

Her brother, also, felt that it was a mistake to deprive so fair and radiant a young life of the joy that should certainly be its due; and he had already determined to disobey the instructions he had received and to prevent the incarceration of his young sister's charms. His motive, however, was far from being disinterested, since his nature was a depraved one; and in order to gratify his desire for low pleasures and his mercenary, avaricious instincts, he determined to use his sister's beauty as a decoy for securing wealth for them both.

To this end he had already encouraged the very obvious attentions of the rich, elderly libertine, Baron Geronte de Ravoir, who had travelled with them in the diligence, and who had become so fascinated with Manon's young loveliness that he desired above all things to possess her; and when the foppish, amorous Baron presently invited the brother and sister to join him at supper, Lescaut eagerly accepted

for both.

Meanwhile the handsome young student, Des Grieux, had no sooner beheld the fair Manon than he had become so enthralled by her exquisite, ethereal beauty and delicate grace, that he could scarce take his eyes from her face; and eagerly making his way towards her, he soon found an opportunity to enter into conversation with her, and asked her name and destination.

Manon replied simply and shyly, but her tones were so sad and she sighed so deeply as she spoke of the convent life awaiting her at her journey's end, that Des Grieux, filled with pity and distress, besought her not to think any more of taking the veil, but to allow him to contrive some means of escape for her.

As the pair gazed into each other's eyes and talked thus eagerly together, a deep love sprang up spontaneously in their hearts; for both were young, fair, and of ardent temperaments, and were, moreover, mutually attracted to one another by a strange, but

sweet magnetism which neither could resist.

Des Grieux was overjoyed to find in Manon the answering sympathy of a delicate, sensitive, highlystrung and passionate nature for which his own poetic temperament had longed; and he eagerly besought her to meet him again later on in the evening. Finally, Manon agreed to do so; and then, hearing her brother calling to her, she hurried away into the inn, leaving Des Grieux to wander apart from the merry throng once more and to indulge in his new rapturous thoughts alone.

Meanwhile the well-seasoned roué, Baron Geronte, had not been idling his time; for, having already determined to carry Manon off by force with him to Paris, there to become his mistress, he secretly called aside the landlord of the inn and arranged with him to have a post-chaise ready in a secluded spot behind the inn at a certain time during the evening.

It happened, however, that this conversation was overheard by Edmond, one of the young students, who, having noticed the mutual attraction of love between Manon and Des Grieux, now approached the latter and informed him of Geronte's plan for the abduction of the beautiful girl.

Full of dismay at this news, Des Grieux entreated the assistance of Edmond, who declared that the only thing to be done was for Des Grieux himself to make use of the waiting post-chaise and to depart in it with Manon before the old roué could complete his plans.

Des Grieux hailed this scheme with relief and joy; and Edmond, eager to help in such a mischievous trick, ran off to make arrangements for the post-

chaise to be got ready at once.

Meanwhile, Lescaut, ever ready to satisfy his gambling craze, was already engaged with his new companion in playing cards and dice, and in drinking with some of the wilder students; and so absorbed were both he and Geronte, that they did not notice that Manon had again come out into the courtyard and was talking with Des Grieux in a quiet corner.

Des Grieux quickly told the beautiful girl of Geronte's plot for her abduction, and of his own plans for her rescue; and again declaring his deep love for her, entreated her to go with him instead to Paris, where they would dwell together in perfect

happiness.

At first, Manon tried to resist; but her love for Des Grieux overwhelmed every other feeling, and she declared she would gladly go with him wherever he would. The lovers, therefore, crept stealthily to the back of the courtyard, where they found the post-chaise already waiting; and it was not until they had entered the vehicle and were driving along at a merry rate that Geronte and Lescaut saw what had happened.

The disappointed roué stamped and raved about the courtyard, nearly choking with rage at having his fair victim thus snatched from his grasp under his very nose; but Lescaut soon found a means of pacifying him. Knowing his sister's love of luxury and comfort, Lescaut believed that she could only be happy whilst the means of gratifying her naturally extravagant desires were forthcoming; and, there-

fore, he bade Geronte not to despair of winning her yet, since, when the young student's slender purse was exhausted, Manon might be enticed away from him by the offer of such magnificent living as Geronte would have to offer her.

This, indeed, proved to be the case; for when Des Grieux had lavished all the means at his immediate disposal upon gratifying the artistic longings of the ardent girl whom he had taken under his protection, he found himself helpless to retain so bright a creature within the restrictions of a narrowly-limited

purse.

Manon loved Des Grieux passionately; but her voluptuous, pleasure-loving soul craved for luxury and extravagant amusements such as Des Grieux could not possibly gratify in the humble little cottage to which he had taken her. The consequence was that when the Baron Geronte at length arrived on the scene during Des Grieux's absence, his offer of a magnificent house, and all the glittering delights that wealth could purchase, was too strong a temptation for the sunshine-loving Manon, who thus allowed herself to be lured away from her true lover to become the mistress and petted favourite of one for whom she had no real affection.

Geronte's admiration, however, was pleasing to her; and for some weeks Manon lived a life of continual pleasure and luxury in the Baron's magnificent hotel, where her every whim was gratified and where she

reigned almost as a queen.

Her brother, Lescaut, was well pleased with the turn events had taken, since he, also, now lived a life of luxury at the expense of his sister's wealthy protector; but he was clever enough to see that Manon would not long be satisfied with her present distractions, since her ever-changing moods and iridescent nature demanded variety, and that satiety of even luxury must inevitably come. He realised, also, that her love for Des Grieux was not dead, but only awaited his reappearance to burst forth into full

bloom once more; and he knew that Des Grieux alone would have lasting influence in his sister's life.

For his own ends, therefore, and for the sake of having future means of gratifying his low tastes, Lescaut sought out the wretched Des Grieux once more, and encouraged him to gamble desperately, enticing him to this course by telling him that he would thus secure the wealth that should eventually enable him to win back the radiant Manon whom he still so fondly loved. He even went further still, and arranged for an interview between the pair; but dire misfortune came of this.

One day Geronte had arranged for a grand entertainment to be given before his beautiful mistress in their hotel, having secured the services of certain musicians and singers to give renderings of some high-flown verses which he had himself composed in praise of her beauty; and he engaged also a dancing-master to give her instructions in the minuet and other fashionable dances of the period; but finding that the spoilt beauty soon showed signs of boredom, he left the hotel with his friends to take a stroll along the Boulevards, somewhat piqued, asking her to join him later on, but intending to return himself shortly to see how she amused herself during his absence.

This was the very hour for which Lescaut had arranged the meeting between Des Grieux and Manon; and a few minutes after the departure of the Baron,

the lovers were in each other's arms.

Manon was overjoyed at finding herself once more in the presence of her beloved Des Grieux; and the latter so quickly fell under the magic spell of her fatal fascination, that his first reproaches were soon forgotten in the passionate words of love and endearment which he could not repress.

So absorbed in their joy were the lovers that, oblivious of their surroundings, they paid no heed to the passing of time; and thus it came to pass that they were presently discovered by Geronte, still folded

in each other's arms.

Furiously jealous at the sight, Geronte instantly rushed out from the hotel and denounced Manon to the authorities as a person of ill repute; and, in spite of her tears and entreaties, the unhappy girl was dragged off to prison and subsequently condemned to deportation.

Lescaut, still acting for his own selfish ends, made several endeavours, assisted by the almost frantic Des Grieux, to save the wretched victim from her awful fate; but all the efforts they made were in vain.

Des Grieux was overcome with grief and despair at the failure of his attempts to effect Manon's escape from prison on the day before she sailed, and, rather than be parted from his beloved one, when the last chance of rescue had vanished, he offered himself as a cabin-boy on board the vessel that conveyed her to America.

He was thus enabled to be of some small comfort to her on her arrival in the strange land she had dreaded so much; but, even here, fate was still against the lovers. Manon's fatal beauty was the means of placing further perils in her path, and, in order to escape a worse danger than any which had threatened her before, she was compelled to make a sudden hurried flight, accompanied by the everfaithful Des Grieux.

The lovers now were forced to wander as fugitives in a vast solitary wilderness, far from human habitation and aid, and where starvation soon met them face to face.

All too quickly, poor Manon wasted and drooped, her bright butterfly nature utterly crushed by such terrible reverses; and at last, one day, as the pair toiled on their way, she sank to the ground dying from exhaustion.

Full of despair, Des Grieux vainly sought for water and refreshment, to save the precious life he loved so well; but Manon, knowing herself to be past all human aid, called him back to her side once more, and, folded closely in his trembling arms, she expired, declaring her love for him with her last breath.

Heart-broken, Des Grieux, with a cry of woe, fell senseless beside the dead body of his beloved Manon—that Manon, so fair and so alluring, such a bewildering contrast of passionate love and mischievous coquetry, a fascinating, sunshine-loving butterfly with the tender heart of a true woman.

LA BOHÊME

WHEN Louis Philippe, the Citizen King of the French, was vainly trying to retain his seat upon a tottering throne, two young students might have been seen one cold Christmas Eve at work in an attic in the Ouartier Latin, in Paris.

These two were Marcel, a painter, and Rudolf, a poet; two careless, light-hearted young men, who, together with their friends, Schaunard, a musician, and Colline, a philosopher, loved to regard themselves as great artists, whom a cold and unappreciative world had as yet failed to recognise.

Full of buoyant spirits, daring, reckless, and happygo-lucky, these four students seemed to pass a charmed existence; a life which, though full of ups and downs, of wealth and poverty, of joy and sorrow, they would not have exchanged for any other, since they were true Bohemians at heart, to whom the intoxicating atmosphere of the Quartier Latin was as the very breath of life. Extravagant to the last degree, they spent their money lavishly when Fortune smiled upon them, feasting like lords, indulging their sweethearts, snatching at every joy within their reach, and reckless of what the next morn might bring forth; and when rainy days came quickly once more, nothing remaining to tell the tale of their recent magnificence, they cheerfully returned to work again, no whit dismayed by reverses, but eager to retrieve their broken fortunes. For joy was to be found even in poverty; and sparkling wit, redundant spirits, and optimistic belief in a dazzling future never forsook them,

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whether they dined off venison or a dry crust! Free, untrammelled by social conventions, they obeyed the magic impulse of their quickly-coursing young blood and the dictates of generous hearts and vivid minds; and, sunshine or rain, nothing could damp the ardour of these bold spirits in their impetuous pursuit of

the fairest joys of life.

Thus it was with Rudolf and Marcel on this Christmas Eve; for though their fortunes were at that moment at the lowest ebb, and they knew not whence their next meal would come, yet were they merry and light-hearted, as though the fickle goddess had never ceased to smile. There was no fire in the grate, and no food in the cupboard, but both enthusiasts tried to believe that neither were necessary even on such a freezing day. Whilst Rudolf endeavoured to warm himself by writing fiery matter for his fondly imagined "great" journal, The Beaver, Marcel worked vigorously at his equally "great" picture, "The Passage of the Red Sea," wielding his brushes with fingers stiff with cold, stamping his feet and changing position frequently in order to keep circulation going; but at last, both were obliged to confess that they were nearly frozen, and that unless they could make a fire of some kind, their "genius" would soon be lost to the world for ever!

"Sooner than that," cried Marcel, "let's make a

bonfire of my great picture!"

But Rudolf declared that such a remedy would be worse than the disease, since he could not endure the odour of burning paint; and then, seized with a happy thought, he dragged forth from a hidden recess the MS. of a mighty drama with which he had once had hopes of astonishing the world, and declaring heroically that its pungent wit and sparkling dialogue should give them warmth, and the world would have to bear its loss as best it could. So, act by act, and page by page, the play was recklessly set alight; and as the two friends drew up their chairs and warmed their hands at the grateful blaze, they merrily bade

one another to observe the bright sparks of wit that

flashed from the dusty pages!

Whilst they were thus engaged, Colline, the "great" philosopher, entered the room, bearing under his arms a bundle of books, with which he had been vainly endeavouring to raise funds for the general use; and, flinging the parcel on the table, announced in an aggrieved tone that Christmas Eve was indeed highly honoured, since no pawning was allowed that day! Then, observing that a fire was actually burning in the grate, which he had left black and cheerless, he ran eagerly to thaw his frozen limbs, joining gaily in the applause that greeted each addition to the greedy bonfire, and hailing Rudolf as a noble benefactor of freezing mankind.

Just as the last flame was dying down, a pleasant interruption came: for two serving boys suddenly entered, the one carrying abundant fuel, and the other laden with rich provisions of all kinds. Having solemnly laid down their burdens, the lads departed without a word; and then the three students, not troubling to inquire into the cause of this timely miracle, immediately fell upon the good things with loud cries of delight. Colline snatched up the fuel with frantic haste, and quickly built up a roaring fire; whilst Marcel and Rudolf seized upon the provisions, and proceeded to lay out a feast with lavish extravagance, and sublime disregard of the next day's needs

With the entrance of Schaunard, the musician, they learnt that he was the giver of the feast, having had a happy and unexpected windfall, which, with the usual generosity of the Quartier Latin, he was anxious to share with his friends; and then, the table being spread to their satisfaction, the four students sat down to enjoy the treat.

Just when the hilarity was at its height, there came a knock at the door, and the voice of Benoit, the landlord, was heard calling for admission; and, knowing well enough that this unwelcome intruder

could only have come for one purpose—to demand his long-overdue rent—the students were at first inclined to refuse him admission.

Then, having hastily arranged a better plan of action for getting rid of him for a longer time, they opened the door with a flourish, and as Benoit entered with a rent-paper, which he presented to Marcel as the tenant of the room, they greeted him with a boisterous welcome, expressing themselves as overjoyed to see him, and inviting him to join them at their feast.

Though amazed at being received in such a friendly manner, Benoit walked unerringly into the trap that had been laid for him; and, always ready to accept luxuries at another's expense, he willingly allowed himself to be led to the table and helped to the good things. The wily students, enjoying their trick immensely, plied the greedy landlord with wine until his brains became muddled and his vision too uncertain to observe that he was being laughed at: and then, cunningly leading the conversation round to love and gallantry, they declared that he must be a sad rogue with the ladies, since they had heard of his many amours and intrigues. Benoit, though somewhat advanced in years, was delighted at being taken for such a gay young Lothario, and agreed with all they said, even enlarging on his imaginary adventures and painting himself in more glaring colours still; but this boasting, to his astonishment, was not received with the approval he expected. For the four students, suddenly pretending to be shocked beyond measure at such licentious conduct and declaring that one so debauched was not fit to breathe the same air with themselves, seized the silly old braggart by the scruff of the neck, and bundled him out of the room and down the stairs with more haste and force than ceremony.

Knowing that they were now safe for a few hours, the friends returned to the room, laughing merrily at the easy way in which they had disposed of the tiresome landlord for the time being; and then Schaunard, declaring that it was folly to remain within doors when Christmas gaieties were afoot without, suggested that they should divide the remainder of the money he had brought and go forth to spend it, concluding with a supper at the Café Momus, one of their favourite haunts when in funds.

This suggestion being received with acclamation, they proceeded to carry it out at once; and having divided the money equally between them, they set off in high good humour to spend it, with the exception of Rudolf, who remained behind to finish the article for his new and precious journal, promising to join his companions in a short time at the café.

When his three friends had noisily departed, Rudolf brought the candles nearer to his work, and began to write; but he had scarcely written a few words, when he heard a timid knock at the door, and on opening it, was amazed to see a poorly-clad but lovely young girl standing there, holding a key in one hand and an extinguished candle in the other. Her beauty was of that ethereal, refined, and exquisitely delicate quality that particularly appeals to the sensitive poetic mind; and as Rudolf gazed upon the girl's velvety pale skin, slight graceful form, soft dreamy eyes, and tiny white hands, a wave of joy flooded his artistic soul at the mere sight of one so fair, and yet so frail.

So fragile, indeed, was the young girl, that the effort of climbing the stairs had completely exhausted her and brought on a violent fit of coughing; and scarcely had she explained that she had called to beg a light for her candle, which had gone out, than she was seized with sudden faintness, and would have fallen to the ground had not Rudolf caught her in his

arms.

Quickly placing the girl in a chair, the young student revived her with water, and made her drink some wine afterwards, watching her the while with increasing interest and a strange joy, which he felt instinctively was reciprocated; for when his fair visitor opened her eyes, she looked upon him with the sweet shy glances of newly-born passion.

Having recovered from her swoon, however, the girl arose at once, and asked again for her candle to be lighted; and when Rudolf had performed this small office for her, trembling with emotion as he placed the light in the tiny hand, which seemed to him one of her greatest charms, she bade him farewell, and opened the door. Then, remembering her key, which she had dropped when seized with faintness, she turned to look for it; and in so doing, the draught from the door blew out the light once more. At the same moment, Rudolf's candle was also extinguished, so that the room was plunged in darkness; and the young student, moved by a sudden impulse, slipped round to the door and fastened it.

Both were now groping in the darkness, the girl seeking her key, which Rudolf presently found and put in his own pocket, still making no effort to get a light; for he was filled with a sudden fear that this sweet young creature would shortly leave him, and he longed above all things to prolong her stay. They talked to each other in a happy way as they continued the search in the dark; and presently, Rudolf, guided by his companion's sweet voice, came close to her side, and caught her little hand in his. Thrilled by her touch, the young student could no longer restrain the passion that now filled his heart with such exquisite joy; and folding her in his arms, he poured forth an eager declaration of his love, to which, to his delight, the young girl as gladly responded.

Having presently described his own life and occupation, Rudolf questioned his companion as to hers; and the girl informed him that her name was Mimi, and that she worked fine embroideries for a living.

Whilst they were still talking happily together, the voices of Marcel, Colline, and Schaunard were heard outside, calling loudly for their companion to come and join them in their pleasure, to which Rudolf returned an impatient answer, angry at the interruption; but Mimi, thus learning that her lover had gaiety afoot, suggested that she should go with him, that they might pass the evening together. Rudolf, overjoyed that she was thus willing to acknowledge him as her accepted lover, gladly made ready to go out; and, hand locked in hand, the two went forth joyously to join in the merry-making of Christmas Eve.

They soon reached an open square, at one side of which was the Café Momus, the favourite meetingplace of the Quartier Latin; and here they were joined by the three students, who received Mimi with a

hearty welcome.

The square presented a lively scene, and was filled with a crowd of students, work-girls, and children, with their parents, bargaining at the brilliantly lighted shops and stalls, and all bent on light-hearted enjoyment; and the shouting of the street vendors as they called their wares, the gleeful cries of the children, and the laughter of the youths and maidens as they chatted and made merry together, filled the air with a confused medley of sound, the keynote of which was reckless mirth.

Rudolf, seeing a pretty bonnet trimmed with pink roses in one of the shops, went in with Mimi to buy it for her, utterly regardless of the fact that its price swallowed all his share of Schaunard's windfall; and when the delighted Mimi had placed this fascinating "creation" upon her dainty head, they went to join their companions at the Café Momus for supper.

Finding the café crowded within, the three friends seated themselves at a table outside, from whence they could the better observe the amusing scene taking place in the square; and having ordered an extravagant supper, they began to enjoy themselves with

their usual careless abandon.

As they sat there, an extremely pretty, coquettish, and smartly-dressed girl approached the café, accompanied by a fussy old gentleman, with whom she presently sat down at an outside supper-table a few

yards further along; and at the sight of the newcomer, Marcel turned pale, and began to fidget nervously in his chair. For this aggravatingly pretty young woman was Musetta, a former sweetheart of Marcel's, with whom he had quarrelled some time ago, and who had in revenge quickly found a new admirer. These two really loved each other, but their quarrels and separations were frequent; for Musetta was a born coquette, and also having a passion for fine clothes and luxuries such as Marcel seldom had the means to provide, she would occasionally desert him for an adorer more richly endowed with the means of satisfying her extravagant wants. Her latest conquest was this fussy old noble, Alcindoro de Mitonneaux, who had been so flattered by the pretty girl's attentions, which she bestowed on him in pique at Marcel's conduct, that still considering himself to be somewhat of a beau, he had allowed her to twist him round her clever little finger with ease, and to drag from him much of his carefully hoarded wealth.

Thus it came about that Musetta was gorgeously attired, and was filled with elation at the effect her finery made upon all who knew her amongst the Christmas crowd; but upon observing Marcel taking supper outside the Café Momus, she had hoped specially to attract his attention, and for this purpose had seated herself opposite, for the sight of this man, whom she really loved, had immediately dissatisfied her with her present uninteresting cavalier, of whom she had already tired.

But Marcel at first refused to look in the direction of this coquettish temptress, whom he still so passionately adored; and then, Musetta, annoyed at such tantalising behaviour, resorted to noise in order to make her presence noted. She dropped a plate with a great clatter upon the hard ground, where it broke into many pieces; she talked in a loud voice to her companion, scolding him vigorously when he remonstrated with her for her noisiness; and then,

finding that she was still unnoticed, she began, as a last resource, to sing, to the great disgust of old Alcindoro, who irritably endeavoured to make her stop.

The sound of Musetta's sweet singing was more than Marcel was proof against; and, fascinated in spite of himself, he turned his eyes upon the girl with an intense look of passionate entreaty and longing.

Musetta, recognising at once that her lover had capitulated, now sought to rid herself of the tiresome old beau at her side; and, uttering an exclamation of pretended pain, she declared that her foot was pinched beyond bearing. Then, taking off one of her shoes, she thrust it into the hand of Alcindoro, and imperiously bade him to take it to a boot shop in an adjacent street, and bring her a pair of shoes one size larger; and the fussy old gentleman, not daring to refuse, being in wholesome fear of his charming inamorata's wayward temper and sharp tongue, hobbled away with the shoe, grumbling furiously.

The students had watched this little manœuvre with great amusement; and when the foolish old dupe had disappeared, Marcel rushed across to Musetta, and

embraced her with loving fervour.

Whilst the reunited lovers were thus rejoicing together, the sound of beating drums announced the approach of a patrol of soldiers; and immediately the crowd of merry-makers in the square gathered to one side to leave a clear space for the picket to march through. The soldiers soon appeared, headed by a band; and as they passed through the square to the main thoroughfare, the crowd quickly followed, anxious to see the tattoo that was about to take place.

The students decided to join this merry throng also; and, having by this time no money left to pay for the luxurious supper they had just enjoyed, Musetta mischievously suggested that they should leave their bill on her table, and tell the waiter that old Alcindoro would pay for it. Hailing this suggestion with hilarious applause, the gay students gave the necessary

instructions to the waiter, and hurried quickly from the square, Rudolf and Mimi arm-in-arm, Schaunard playing a new pipe he had just bought, and Marcel and Colline carrying Musetta between them, for, hav-

ing but one shoe, she could not walk.

When the pompous Alcindoro presently returned with the pair of shoes he had been despatched to buy, he found the supper-table deserted, and his fickle charmer flown; and upon the obsequious waiter presenting him with the long bill run up by the extravagant students, with which had been incorporated his own smaller one, he realised the trick that had been played upon him, and began to storm lustily, though in the end he had to submit and settle the bill, rather than become the laughing-stock of the café.

Marcel and Musetta now passed some months happily together, for though the coquettish girl still took every possible opportunity for a flirtation with anyone who might happen to admire her, yet she really loved Marcel only. But she would not be tyrannised over, for her high spirit could not brook restraint; and if Marcel showed signs of wishing to curb her inordinate love of fine clothes and admiration, she quickly resented it. The two, however, fared better than Rudolf and Mimi, who, in spite of their passionate love, yet spent a miserable existence together.

For Rudolf's love was of that all-absorbing and madly jealous nature, that was for ever imagining and fostering suspicions of the object of his affections; and not a glance nor a word could he bear Mimi to bestow elsewhere. Their life was, therefore, passed in a constant state of misunderstandings; for though they might be deliriously happy one day, they would suffer for this by many weeks of misery. Often they were on the point of separating for ever; and, indeed, at last they finally agreed to this.

At the time when Mimi, after a great mental struggle, came to this resolution, she had been

avoided by Rudolf for some little time; and, having learnt that he had joined Marcel and Musetta at an inn on the borders of the Latin Quartier, she made

her way there one cold wintry morning.

As she stood waiting outside the inn for Marcel, to whom she had sent a message desiring him to help her to carry out her resolve, she was seized with a violent fit of coughing; for of late the wasting disease to which she had always been inclined had developed with alarming rapidity, and her frail form was con-

stantly shaken by a racking cough.

When Marcel presently appeared, he was shocked at her wasted looks, and anxiously tried to draw her into the inn; but Mimi refused to enter for fear of meeting with Rudolf. She then told Marcel of the constantly strained relations between herself and Rudolf, whose mad jealousy made them both wretched; and she implored him to help her to part finally from her lover, since she felt that their lives

would be at least more peaceful apart.

Whilst she was still speaking of this, Rudolf himself appeared in the doorway of the inn; and, fearing to meet him just then, Mimi crept behind a group of plane trees as he approached. As Marcel turned to greet his friend, Rudolf declared that he had come to seek his assistance in effecting his final separation from Mimi, describing their strained relations in very much the same way as the poor girl herself had done; and then, his bitter tone giving way to a softer mood, he admitted that his jealous suspicions were really groundless, being caused only by his great love for her. He next began to speak in anxious tones of Mimi's frail health, declaring that her constant cough, wasted form, and feverish looks filled him with despair, since he knew that they were the unmistakable heralds of an early death; and Mimi, who could not fail to hear all that passed, thus realising for the first time the doom that awaited her, was so overcome with woe that her sobs quickly made her presence known to her lover.

In a moment Rudolf was at her side, embracing her tenderly, and entreating her to enter the inn for warmth and refreshment; but this Mimi again refused to do, declaring that she had come to bid him a final farewell, having at last made up her mind to see him no more, since they could not be happy together. Rudolf, refusing to believe her in earnest, passionately pleaded his cause with her, so that her resolution soon melted away; and whilst the once more reconciled lovers were thus happily engaged, Marcel, hearing Musetta's saucy laugh pealing forth from the inn, dashed within, fully convinced that she was carrying on a lively flirtation in his absence. His conviction proved to be a right one, for presently the two emerged from the inn squabbling violently, Marcel jealously accusing the girl of accepting the attentions of a new admirer, and declaring that he would not permit her to be so free with her smiles. The highspirited, admiration-loving Musetta resented this interference with her pleasure, for her wayward nature would not brook restraint; and hotly declaring that she should flirt just whenever she pleased, she impetuously bade Marcel farewell, and flounced away in

Mimi and Rudolf, however, were by this time quite reconciled to each other, and yet once again they entered upon a phase of delirious joy. But this happy phase, like the many others that had preceded it, also quickly came to an end; and the separation that followed was the longest they had yet endured.

Rudolf and Marcel, both boing thus deprived of their loved ones, joined their student friends once more, and tried to interest themselves in their work as formerly, endeavouring to heal their sore hearts in the pursuit of art. But neither could forget the joy that had been theirs; and one day as they sat working together in the same old attic in which pretty Mimi had first introduced herself, the thoughts of both turned back to the days of their happy love. Marcel, whenever his companion's glance was averted, would

press to his lips a bunch of ribbons that had once belonged to Musetta; and Rudolf, when he thought himself unobserved by his friend, would take from a drawer beside him the little rose-trimmed bonnet Mimi had left him as a keepsake, and tenderly caress it.

Though it was now many months since they had parted, they had seen the girls from time to time, though from afar; and observing that they were richly clad, knew that they had found new admirers. They were speaking of this as they sat at work, making a sorry pretence of not caring about the circumstance, which, however, revived all the pain in their hearts; and since this attempt at mutual comfort was a dismal failure, they gladly hailed the arrival of Colline and Schaunard, who brought with them a very meagre meal, consisting of four small rolls and a herring. For the friends were just at that time going through one of their frequent penniless stages; but with their usual careless good-humour, they sat down to the humble food with as much hilarity as though it had been a feast of the highest order, gaily inviting one another to imagine that the crusts were dainty dishes. and pledging one another in water, as though it had been champagne.

Whilst they were thus making merry, the door was suddenly opened; and to the astonishment of all, Musetta entered, wearing an anxious face, and appearing much agitated. In answer to the eager questions poured upon her, she announced that Mimi was without, but was too weak and exhausted to mount the stairs, being, in fact, in a dying condition; and upon hearing that his beloved one was so near, Rudolf rushed to her assistance, and, with the help of his friends, brought her into the room, and laid her

tenderly upon the bed.

Mimi and Rudolf embraced one another passionately; and whilst they were thus absorbed in their joy, Musetta related to the others the reason of their sudden visit. Having heard that Mimi had left her rich admirer, and was now lying in the last stages of consumption, she had hastened to her side; and upon the poor exhausted girl expressing a passionate desire to see Rudolf once more before her death, she had undertaken to bring her to him, and by half carrying her had succeeded in this difficult enterprise. She now asked the students if they had any food or cordials with which to revive the fainting girl, and was sadly informed that they had nothing in their store, and no money either; but Colline and Schaunard presently left the room, taking with them an overcoat which they meant to pawn.

Mimi presently motioned Marcel to her side, and, placing Musetta's hand in his, desired that they would be reconciled once more for her sake; and she was filled with joy when the two embraced, and declared

that they still loved one another dearly.

Then Musetta, anxious to leave the dying girl alone with her lover, that they might have a last happy talk together, suggested to Marcel that they should go to fetch Mimi's little muff, which she had asked for, being unable to keep her hands warm; and so the two presently departed on this kindly errand.

Finding that they were now alone, Mimi lay happily in Rudolf's arms, and told him again and again that her love for him had never changed; and the young student, overjoyed at thus learning that he was still beloved by the being he himself adored, declared passionately that they would never again be parted, in his gladness failing to realise that Mimi's little spark of life was even now almost extinguished.

Schaunard and Colline presently returned with food and a cordial they had bought with the money obtained by pawning the coat, saying also that a doctor would shortly arrive; and soon after Marcel and Musetta appeared with the muff they had been

to fetch.

Mimi placed her tiny hands in the muff with childish pleasure; and presently, declaring that she now felt quite warm, she closed her eyes and seemed to rest.

Rudolf then gently moved away, and questioned his friends in a low voice as to when the doctor would arrive; but when Musetta approached the bed with the cordial she had poured out, she saw to her sorrow that Mimi was already dead.

Hearing her exclamation of consternation, Rudolf ran forward and took Mimi's cold little hand in his; and then, gradually realising the terrible truth, he uttered a cry of anguish and sank, overcome with

grief and despair, beside her lifeless form.

MADAM BUTTERFLY

In a quaint little house perched at the top of a steep hill in Nagasaki, great preparations for coming festivities might have been observed one bright sunny afternoon; for within the next few hours, a young American naval officer, Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton, was to be wedded to Cho Cho San, a pretty little geisha maid, and was even now inspecting his new abode with old Goro, the broker, who had arranged

this "Japanese Marriage" for him.

For the young American, like many others of his class, had sought to relieve the monotony of his sojourn in Nagasaki by amusing himself with the pretty maids of the town; and having conceived a sudden passion for the fairest of them all, Cho Cho San, or Butterfly, as she was more generally called, whose bewitching daintiness and sweet nature had quickly enthralled his heart, he had determined to indulge his love at all costs, and for this reason had engaged the services of Goro.

The old marriage broker, delighted at having secured such a desirable client, to whom dollars seemed of little count, assured the eager lover that the matter was quite an easy one to arrange; and not only did he undertake to draw up the marriage contract (which, however, could be annulled monthly!), and to assemble the relations and necessary legal officials, but also secured for him a house in which to spend this blissful dream, a nest which he well knew would sooner or later be deserted.

And so well had Goro managed his commission, that the "marriage" was successfully arranged, and 270

about to take place; and now, as Pinkerton followed the obsequious old broker from room to room of the charming retreat that had been prepared for his pleasure, he was delighted with everything he saw, admiring the wonderful mechanical contrivances by which the building could be altered according to fancy, and praising his guide for his careful work. For Goro had forgotten nothing, not even the Japanese servants, whom he presently introduced to their new master; nor the wedding guests, the relations of pretty Butterfly, who were expected to shortly

appear for the ceremony.

Just as Pinkerton was beginning to tire of the old broker's loquacity, the first of the wedding guests arrived. This was Sharpless, the American Consul, who had come in his official capacity, and also as the friend and compatriot of the bridegroom. He was an older man than Pinkerton, for whom, however, he had much affection; so much, indeed, that he had come with the intention of persuading his friend to abandon this Japanese so-called "marriage," knowing that little real happiness was likely to come of it. Although he had not actually seen the little bride, he had heard her speaking when she called the day before at the Consulate about her marriage, and had been so impressed by the thrilling charm of her voice that he was persuaded she regarded this step with intense seriousness, not as a mere temporary amusement; and in his own large-hearted tenderness, it pained him to think that one so fragile and innocent should be called upon to suffer when the awakening should come.

He therefore seriously asked Pinkerton to reflect again before he entered into this connection, of which he would doubtless quickly tire and have no compunctions in severing, since it seemed that the Japanese maiden's love was so deep that she believed her future husband would regard their marriage as a binding one; and with sincere earnestness, he besought his young friend not to gratify what was to

him a mere passing fancy, at the expense of bruising the wings of this trusting little Butterfly. Pinkerton, however, impatiently refused to listen to his friend's counsel, for he had no compunctions himself as to the course he was pursuing, which was one frequently practised by others of his class with no serious consequences, since the deserted little Japanese "wives" were afterwards usually contented to accept new husbands of their own race; and gaily assuring the prudent Consul that no harm was likely to come of his pleasure, he ran to greet his little bride, who at this moment appeared on the open terrace, accompanied by a bevy of merry girl friends.

A veritable little butterfly in appearance was Cho Cho San, sweet and dainty as a freshly-opened flower bud; sunny-hearted and gay, yet full of quaint and thoughtful fancies; childish, fragile and fairy-like, yet possessing a woman's heart, pure, true, and capable of a deep and abiding passion. She had bestowed this treasure of love upon the handsome Pinkerton with childish and implicit trust; and her belief in his professed love for her was so intense that she never gave a single thought to the future possibility of his affection waning, but considered

herself the happiest girl in all Japan.

She now greeted him with bright smiles, introducing him with pride to her friends; and then, with simple artlessness, she began to prattle merrily to the two Americans, telling them of her family history, how her mother was poor, and how she herself had been obliged to become a geisha to earn a living. When asked about her father, she grew suddenly sad, and merely stated that he was dead; but later on they learnt that he had met his death bravely by "Hara-kiri," a sword having been sent to him by the Mikado with a message to despatch himself. Presently, Butterfly herself, when asking Pinkerton's permission to retain a few girlish treasures she had brought with her, showed him this very sword, which she revered as her greatest possession. As a further

proof of her perfect trust in her future husband, she now whispered in his ear the startling fact that she had the day before visited the Christian missionhouse, to adopt his faith, having been willing for his sake to renounce her old religion, a fact which, if known to her relations, would cause them to

regard her as an outcast.

By this time, the relations who had been bidden to the wedding had arrived; and a motley enough group of undesirables they were in the eyes of Pinkerton, who, however, received them graciously, accepting their flowery compliments with gay goodnature. The Régistrar and Commissioner having also arrived, the wedding took place without further delay, being concluded in a few minutes, the ceremony merely consisting of the reading of the marriage contract by the Commissioner, and the signing of the same by the bride and bridegroom.

This simple proceeding over, the guests crowded round to congratulate the happy pair, and having wished the young American good luck, Sharpless and the other officials took their leave at once. Pinkerton now tried to rid himself of the wedding guests. longing to be left alone with his dainty little bride; but this he found to be a very difficult matter, for the impecunious relations of the pretty Butterfly had come with the intention of enjoying themselves to the full at the expense of the rich American, and were not to be deprived of such a treat. Finding this to be the case, Pinkerton resigned himself to the inevitable; and, inviting the expectant guests to the refreshment tables, he plied them lavishly with wines, sweetmeats, and all the fanciful Japanese delicacies that had been provided by the ingenious Goro, encouraging their unrestrained greed in the hope that satiety would shortly bring about the fulfilment of his desires.

Just as the hilarity was at its height, however, there came an unexpected interruption; for suddenly an uncouth individual of weird aspect burst in amongst the guests, wildly brandishing his arms, and uttering cries of furious rage. This unwelcome intruder was Butterfly's most important uncle, a Bonze, or Japanese priest, who, having by some means learnt of his niece's visit to the hated Christian mission, had now come to denounce her for her apostacy; and, alarmed at the threatening aspect of one whom they held in awe, the guests drew back in frightened groups. Butterfly, in fear and trembling. also tried to crouch from the sight of her outraged relative; but the Bonze sought her out, and ruthlessly declaring to the relations that she had of her own free will renounced them all and forsaken the religion of her forefathers, he furiously called down curses upon her, in which he was immediately joined by the now angry guests, in whose eves such an offence was unpardonable.

Pinkerton had at first laughed at the extravagant speeches and ridiculous gesticulations of the weirdlooking Bonze; but when the relations took up the denunciation also, he grew angry, and uncere-

moniously turned them all out of the house.

As the imprecations of the departing guests died away in the distance, poor little Butterfly buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears; but Pinkerton folded her in his arms, and soon succeeded in restoring her to smiles and joyousness once more.

"I do not mind anything, if you will only love me!" she said, as she kissed his hand with quaint humility. "Though they have cast me off, yet am I full of joy! I am with you; and you are my people

and my life!"

Night had now closed in, and as they presently wandered out together on to the moonlit terrace, Pinkerton folded his fair bride in his arms in a passionate embrace; and in that moment of ecstasy, the lovers felt that the world was indeed well lost.

A period of intense happiness now followed; but, alas! it was but a short one. For Pinkerton's love

for his little Japanese wife, though passionate at the time, was, as Sharpless had declared, but a passing phase; and when, after a few months had drifted pleasantly by in this pretty dream, his ship had received orders to return to America, he had departed with little real regret. For he did not intend to return to the nest he was now deserting for ever: and in his careless way he felt no compunctions, for he believed that the pretty Butterfly would as easily forget him, and eventually take unto herself a Japanese husband. Yet to ease the pain of his departure, he promised the weeping girl that he would return to her when the robins began to nest; and Butterfly, believing implicitly in this promise, was satisfied, and daily declared to her faithful maid and sole companion, Suzuki, who had no such trusting faith, that this happy event would certainly come to

Later on, when a fair, blue-eyed baby boy was born to her, she rejoiced at the little one's birth the more because of the additional pleasure she felt was in store for the surely-returning father; and even when three years had passed since her wedding-day, and no word had yet come from the faithless Pinkerton, she still hoped and waited patiently, confident that her hopes would be realised. It was quite useless for the handmaid, Suzuki, whose knowledge of such "marriages" was wider, to suggest to her mistress that her hope was a vain one; for the trusting little Butterfly would only grow angry, and refuse

to listen to her.

But, at last, the money which Pinkerton had left for their temporary support (thinking that they would soon be established in some other household) became exhausted; and now, towards the end of the third year, they found themselves within a few coins of destitution. Even on the day when this sad discovery was made, the deserted little bride bid her handmaid not to trouble, since the waiting-time would now soon be over; and rousing herself up to a transport of happy expectation, she reminded Suzuki of Pinkerton's promise to return when the robins should nest, and carried away by her eager thoughts, began to describe the arrival of the expected ship, from which her beloved husband would most

assuredly land and hasten to her side.

But Suzuki, knowing that the robins had already nested several times since the young officer's departure, only muttered gloomily that it was not known for a Western husband to return to a Japanese nest; but when on hearing this Butterfly sprang up with eyes blazing with anger, to soothe and comfort her once more the faithful handmaid re-

peated the eager girl's own hopeful words.

Whilst they were thus talking, a visitor suddenly appeared; and to the delight of Butterfly, this proved to be none other than Sharpless, the American Consul, who had come on a very difficult mission. For he had just received a message from Pinkerton, who was returning at last to Nagasaki, and whose ship was expected to arrive that very day; and in this letter the young lieutenant announced that he was now married to a beautiful American lady, and asked his old friend to seek out the pretty Butterfly, and if she still remembered him, to break this news

as gently as he could.

Butterfly received the Consul with joy; and on hearing that he had a letter from Pinkerton, she clapped her hands and became very excited, declaring that her hopes were about to be realised, and that her beloved husband was really returning to her, as she had never for a moment doubted, or ceased to believe. Her eager anticipation and childish delight quite unmanned the tender-hearted Sharpless, who now saw only too plainly how right he had been when warning Pinkerton that the Japanese maiden regarded their marriage as a binding one, and that her love was a deep and abiding passion, the very breath of life to her; and though he essayed many times to explain his cruel mission, his efforts to do

so were quite in vain. For, upon every sentence he read from the letter, Butterfly put her own happy construction, finding in each line an imaginary message of hope for herself; and so vivid was her delusion, that Sharpless despaired of ever making her

realise the fatal truth.

He was therefore somewhat relieved by the unexpected appearance of old Goro, the marriage broker, who brought with him Prince Yamadori, a wealthy Japanese suitor, whom he had for a long time past tried vainly to induce the deserted wife to accept as a husband, for one so young and pretty was still a tempting prize to offer to his amorous clients. Yamadori had now come to plead his own cause with the obdurate Butterfly, who, however, still refused to listen to him; and, full of indignation, she turned to Sharpless, and cried "You hear what he and that wicked Goro wish me to do! How can I marry him, when I have a beloved husband already, who is now returning to claim me once again?"

Even when Goro, eager to secure her for his wealthy client, reminded her that in Japan desertion constituted divorce, and that she was therefore perfectly free to marry again, she was not to be convinced, but declared scornfully: "But the law of Japan is not the law of my husband's country!"

Seeing that argument was useless in her present state, old Goro and his disappointed client withdrew, hoping for better success on their next visit; and when they had gone, Sharpless, distressed beyond measure at the poor girl's absolute blindness to the fact that Pinkerton had really deserted her, and that he had never even regarded his marriage with her in a serious light at all, but merely as a pleasant interlude made possible by the easy law of Japan, again tried to tell her the real reason for his visit. Having once more dismally failed in this, he next tried to persuade her to accept the wealthy Japanese suitor who desired to make her his bride; but such a suggestion coming from one she trusted so deeply

wounded her that he did not venture to press the

point.

As the final strengthening of her argument, and crowning proof of the utter uselessness of trying to persuade her that she was forgotten, Butterfly ran to fetch her bonny baby boy, and, holding him up before the eyes of the amazed Consul, who had no idea of the child's existence, cried with passionate pride: "Do you think he could forget this proof of our love?"

Sharpless, knowing that Pinkerton had no knowledge that a son had been born to him, was now so overcome with deep emotion that he could scarcely control his feelings of pity for the deserted little Japanese wife; and, utterly unable to reveal the truth to her just then, he hastily took his leave, inwardly railing at his friend for entrusting him with such an

impossible mission.

No sooner had the Consul departed than the roar of cannon was heard from the harbour; and, hurrying to the terrace, Butterfly discovered that this was a salute to an arriving ship, which, to her indescribable joy, she saw was flying the American flag, and by the aid of a telescope made out its name to be the Abraham Lincoln, which she knew to be Pinkerton's vessel. Full of delirious joy, and feeling fully convinced that her beloved one would now without doubt be with her in an hour or two's time, she called to Suzuki, and bade her to quickly bring in the fairest flowers from the garden, that she might adorn the little home with garlands in honour of the master's return.

Though Suzuki had still no belief that the young American would return, she went in haste to gather the flowers, in order to humour her beloved mistress; and as quickly as she brought the lovely fragrant blooms into the house, Butterfly placed them in every available space, calling continually for more, until each room was a perfect bower of roses, violets, lilies, and blossoms of every kind the garden could produce.

Having even strewed sweet-scented petals lavishly upon the floors, Butterfly next dressed her baby in his finest clothes, and arrayed herself in her wedding garments; and then, calling Suzuki, and making three holes in the shoshi, the three settled down to watch for Pinkerton's approach. Many hours passed, and still the expected visitor did not appear; and when darkness set in, Suzuki and the child, tired out with watching, fell fast asleep. But Butterfly would not sleep; and all through the long weary night, she kept a constant watch, never losing hope, but still believing that her beloved one would surely come.

When daylight dawned, Suzuki awakened, and, shocked at her poor little mistress's tired looks, insisted that she should retire to her chamber to rest; and Butterfly, now overcome with fatigue, and wishing to look well when her eagerly expected husband should arrive, was at last persuaded to retire.

When she had departed to the little chamber upstairs, Suzuki, having seen that the little boy was playing happily outside, returned to the flower-decked room, and sank upon her knees before the image of Buddha to pray for her mistress's comfort. Whilst she was thus engaged, there came a gentle tap at the door; and upon opening it, she admitted, to her amazement, not only Sharpless, but Pinkerton also, who, after hearing of the Consul's unavailing visit of the day before, had now come with his friend to seek advice thus early in the morning from the faithful handmaid as to a means of acquainting the expectant Butterfly with the true position of affairs.

Suzuki, thinking for the moment that Pinkerton had indeed returned to claim his little Japanese wife, received him gladly, telling him of Butterfly's preparations for his arrival, and of her trust in him and eager longing for his arrival, each word of which was as a knife in the heart of the now remorseful Pinkerton, who at last realised the cruelty of his conduct, and was filled with grief at the pain he was

about to inflict upon the gentle heart of one who

loved him so truly and deeply.

The handmaid, however, was quickly undeceived upon observing a tall and beautiful lady waiting in the garden; and upon learning from Sharpless that this was the "real" wife of Pinkerton, she fell to the ground, overcome by this realisation of her fears. The kindly Consul gently raised her, and explaining that Mrs. Pinkerton had come to offer protection and care for the helpless baby boy, that his future welfare might be assured, begged her to assist them in this matter by all the means in her power.

Pinkerton, who had been wandering round the flower-decked room, noting with increased emotion the many signs of Butterfly's deep love for him, now declared that he could not bear the anguish of meeting her, and rushed away, leaving the Consul to perform his painful task alone; and as he departed, full of remorse and grief, his wife entered from the

garden.

Kate Pinkerton was a beautiful and kind-hearted woman, and the Japanese girl's sad story had filled her with great pity; and she also added her entreaties that Suzuki would help them to be of

service to her poor little mistress.

Whilst they were discussing this matter, Butterfly was heard calling from the chamber above; and having heard the sound of voices, she immediately afterwards appeared, full of excitement, and expecting to greet her husband. At the sight of Kate, she stopped short, gazing intently upon her; and though no word was spoken, she knew instinctively that this was the woman for whose sake she herself had been cast aside.

Sharpless now expected an outburst of passionate reproach; but to the surprise of all, Butterfly remained quite calm, and bore this sudden shattering of all her cherished hopes with a quiet dignity, so touching that all were moved. When Kate entreated forgiveness for the pain she had so unconsciously been the means

of bringing upon her, she answered gently that she only wished that every happiness might be showered upon her. Then, when asked to give up her baby boy to the guardianship of his father, that his future welfare and prosperity might be assured, she promised quietly that Pinkerton should have his child if he would himself come for him in half an hour's time; and having thus succeeded in their mission, Kate and Sharpless departed, unable to bear any longer the heart-rending sight of such resigned suffering.

When they had gone, Butterfly dismissed Suzuki, and, taking down her father's sword, which she had always carefully cherished, with great reverence kissed the blade. For now that she at last realised the terrible truth that Pinkerton was her husband no longer, and that for his own good she must part with her child also, she had no further desire for life; and as she lifted the sword, she murmured broken-heartedly to herself: "If I can no longer live with honour, at least I can die with honour!"

At that moment, the door was opened to admit the baby boy, who was pushed gently within by Suzuki; and, dropping the sword, Butterfly rushed forward, and clasped her child in her arms in a last passionate embrace.

Then, laying him carefully upon the ground, she suddenly seized the sword once more, and plunged it into her bosom.

When, a little later, Pinkerton entered the room to claim fulfilment of her promise, Butterfly was lying motionless and still; and the faithful heart that had loved him with such true devotion was at rest for ever!

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

(Il Barbiere di Seviglia)

ONE early morning during the eighteenth century, just as the rosy dawn appeared, the sound of soft, sweet music arose from one of the streets of Seville; for a group of picked musicians had been stationed in front of a private house to accompany a serenade to a certain fair lady who dwelt within.

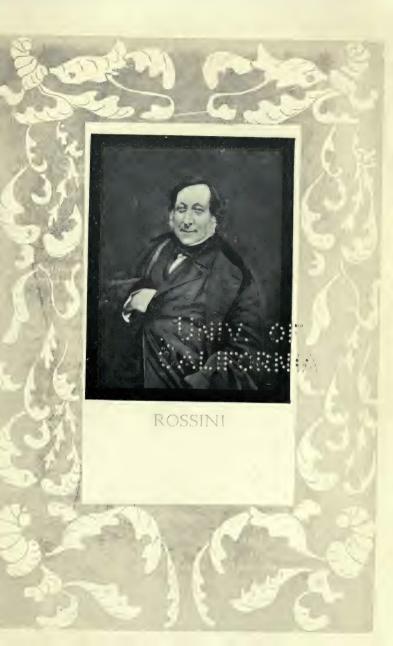
A little apart from the musicians stood the singer, a tall, handsome cavalier, wrapped in a dark cloak; and as his song proceeded, the serenader kept his gaze rivetted upon a window that led out upon the balcony of the house, as though expecting the form of his

adored one to appear in that spot.

This cavalier was the Count Almaviva, a rich nobleman, who, having beheld one day, on a visit to Seville, a lovely maiden upon the balcony of this house, had straightway fallen in love with her; and, in consequence of this he had left his country estate and taken up his abode in Seville, that he might be near the object of his affections, and seek an opportunity to woo her.

He learnt that the young lady's name was Rosina, and that she was the ward of a fussy old physician named Dr. Bartolo; and by means of nightly serenades and frequent strolls past her dwelling-place, the young Count endeavoured to bring himself to the notice of the maiden. Nor was he unsuccessful; for the lovely Rosina, although kept almost a prisoner by her jealous guardian, who desired to wed her himself,

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managed to obtain sight of her serenader and

quickly conceived a romantic passion for him.

In spite of the mutual understanding between them, the pair had never yet met, nor spoken with each other; and to-night the Count had hoped to attain this object. But Rosina was too closely watched by her guardian and her duenna; and when the dawn at length broke Almaviva sadly dismissed his musicians, sending them away with a handsome reward.

After the delighted musicians had departed, the Count remained dejectedly near the abode of his beloved one; and here he was presently accosted by the popular barber and general factorum of the town, a merry roguish fellow named Figaro, whose quick wit and lively mercurial temperament caused him to be in constant request by his many patrons for their jokes and intrigues.

Quickly noticing the dejected looks of the strange cavalier, Figaro entered into conversation with him, offering his services, should he need them; and merrily he described his numerous valuable qualities to the Count, declaring that he was the best matchmaker, plotter, and gossip in all Seville, to say nothing of being the most fashionable adept in his more legitimate occupation of chirurgeon-barber.

Almaviva quickly succumbed to the charm of the roguish barber; and seeing at once that Figaro might be of great use to him, he confided to him the secret of his love for Rosina, and engaged him to assist in his suit, promising to reward him very hand-

somely for his services.

Figaro readily agreed to devote himself to the interest of this new patron; and very quickly his inventive wit suggested ways and means for bringing the lovers together. He informed the Count that old Dr. Bartolo desired to wed his charming ward himself, regardless of the disparity in their ages and the indifference of the lady; in which ridiculous project he was being aided and abetted by another equally

fussy old fellow, one Don Basilio, a music-master. However, as the barber was constantly in and out of the house, he assured the Count that he would find means to communicate with Rosina, and to hoodwink her guardian; and with this assurance the Count

departed, greatly cheered.

Figaro's artful plans succeeded so well that Rosina soon learnt that her love was returned by the handsome cavalier who haunted the precincts of her home, and whom the barber described as a young student named Lindoro; and she now managed to send him a note, in which she declared that his love

was acceptable to her.

The Count was thus filled with joy; and, with the aid of the inventive barber, an interview between the enamoured pair was now devised. At the suggestion of Figaro, the Count disguised himself one evening as a common soldier; and pretending also to be intoxicated, he forced his way with a rowdy, roystering manner into the house of Dr. Bartolo, from whom he demanded a night's lodging as the rightful due of one who served his country; and during the stormy altercation that ensued between the indignant Doctor and himself, Rosina, attracted by the noise,

made her appearance.

Quickly lurching to her side, the pretended soldier managed to reveal his true identity to her; and though instantly separated by the angry and jealous Doctor, the lovers contrived dexterously to exchange letters. The interview was soon brought to an end by the arrival of the guard, drawn thither by the commotion, into whose charge the Doctor gladly handed over his unwelcome guest; but as the officers hurried him away the Count declared to them his real name, and showed them, in proof of his assertion, the high orders and decorations he wore beneath his disguise, upon which they set him free, and respectfully departed, the richer by a substantial gift.

Shortly afterwards the indefatigable Figaro devised

another scheme for the meeting of the lovers; and this time, Almaviva, disguised as a poor musician, was unsuspectingly admitted into the house of Dr. Bartolo, to whom he explained that his name was Don Alonzo, and that he had been sent by his friend

Don Basilio, whom he declared to be ill.

Finding himself not very well received by the old guardian, he handed to him the note he had received from Rosina, pretending he had found it in the inn where Count Almaviva lodged, and offering to show it to the young lady and declare to her that it had been sent by one of the Count's other numerous admirers, that she might thus become estranged from him.

Dr. Bartolo, quite unsuspicious of trickery, readily agreed to this ruse, being very anxious to put an end to his ward's infatuation for the Count, who, as he of course knew by this time, was haunting the neighbourhood; and he thus consented to allow the music lesson to proceed, in order that this disturbing com-

munication might be made to his ward.

He thereupon brought Rosina into the room, and introduced her to the supposed Don Alonzo, in whom, however, she quickly recognised her lover; and at that moment Figaro most opportunely arrived in his capacity as barber to Dr. Bartolo, in order to keep the old gentleman obligingly occupied with his toiletso that the lovers might make arrangements for their elopement, which the Count desired to carry out that night.

Very cleverly, also, the barber managed to secure the keys of certain doors usually kept locked at night, so that Rosina, at the appointed time, could reach the balcony, from whence, by means of a ladder, she

could escape to her lover.

In order to disarm the Doctor's still evident suspicion, the form of a singing lesson was gone through; but, thanks to Figaro's constant chatter and deft manipulation of his client's beard, the lovers managed to exchange confidences between the

snatches of music, and made all the arrangements for their elopement and secret marriage that night.

All went well until, quite suddenly, the old music-master himself appeared on the scene, very much astonished at finding his place and occupation usurped by a strange young man. Figaro, however, with his usual versatility, saved the situation by pretending that Don Basilio really looked extremely ill, and, feeling his pulse with mock anxiety, declared him to be in a high fever, and entreated him to return home to bed. The Count also, by the judicious offer of a well-filled purse, succeeded in persuading the confused professor to depart for the time being.

Dr. Bartolo's suspicions, however, were now fully roused, so that it became necessary for the Count to make a quick escape; and when he had gone the old guardian fussily produced the letter given him by the pretended musician, and endeavoured on his own account to poison Rosina's mind against her lover in the manner agreed upon. Rosina's jealousy against some unknown rival was thus quickly kindled; and angry and distressed at having been deceived, as she supposed, by the Count, she revealed the secret arrangement for her elopement that night.

The wilv old Doctor quickly followed up the vantage he had scored, and now pressed his own suit; and Rosina, in a fit of pique, giving him her consent, he hurried away to make arrangements with a notary to unite them that day. Meeting with Don Basilio, and now learning from him that the strange musician and Count Almaviva were one and the same, he hurried on his plans with still greater eagerness, feeling that with such a daring rival he could not consider himself safe until his marriage contract with Rosina had been signed; and having arranged with the music-master to bring the notary along that same night, he went away to procure the officers of justice to be in readiness to arrest the Count and Figaro should they appear and endeavour to upset his plans.

But success was to be with love and youth; for the star of the Count was in the ascendant, and, with the aid of the irrepressible Figaro, he was able to

accomplish his ends.

Fortunately, the elopement had been planned for the early part of the night; and as soon as darkness set in Almaviva and the barber made their appearance in front of the Doctor's house, and, by means of a ladder, succeeded in reaching the balcony. Here they were presently joined by Rosina, who, though already repenting of her jealous fit, at first repulsed her eager lover, charging him with unfaithfulness; but upon the cavalier explaining the whole matter of the letter, at the same time revealing his true identity as the Count Almaviva, she was quickly reconciled to him.

Whilst the now happy lovers were thus engaged in tender converse, the alert Figaro discovered that the ladder by which they were to reach the ground below had been taken away; and at the same moment Don Basilio appeared on the balcony with the notary, who had brought the contract for the marriage of

Rosina with Dr. Bartolo.

Seeing that no time was to be lost, the three plotters hurried forward, the Count declaring to the notary that Rosina and himself were the parties who were to sign the document; and drawing the amazed Don Basilio aside, he slipped a valuable ring on to his finger, and advised him to be amenable to reason, at the same time judiciously showing him a loaded pistol as an even more persuasive argument.

The old music-master prudently accepted the forced situation with a good grace; and the Count and Rosina immediately signed the marriage contract in the presence of the notary, with Figaro and Don Basilio

as their witnesses.

Just as the joyful lovers were thus lawfully united, Dr. Bartolo arrived with the officers of justice; and seeing that the Count and Figaro had indeed appeared, as he had suspected they would, he furiously denounced them as thieves and rogues, and

commanded the officers to arrest them.

However, Almaviva advanced readily, and with great dignity announced himself as a Grandee of Spain and the newly-made husband of the fair Rosina; and eventually, after a somewhat stormy scene, enlivened by the witty raillery of the lively Figaro, the old Doctor acknowledged his defeat, and reconciled himself to the inevitable with excellent good-humour, even magnanimously bestowing a fatherly blessing upon the triumphant pair.

Thus did these determined lovers gain their hearts' desire; and when Count Almaviva returned home with his charming bride, he took with him as his confidential body-servant the man whose fertile wit had helped him to win his happiness—Figaro, the merry Barber

of Seville.

DER ROSENKAVALIER

(The Rose-Bearer)

In Vienna, during the early years of the reign of Maria Theresa, love intrigues formed one of the chief amusements of persons of quality; and, therefore, it was no strange thing that, early one bright summer morning, the Princess von Werdenberg should be enjoying an interview with an ardent lover in her boudoir, whilst her sleepy, but faithful, lackeys kept watch outside to prevent interruption.

The Princess's husband, Field-Marshall Prince von Werdenberg—an elderly man, too much engrossed in matters of war and sport to be greatly interested in the doings of his pretty wife—was abroad on a hunting expedition; so what more natural than for the Princess—still young and beautiful enough to be one of Cupid's victims—to invite her young kinsman and devoted lover, Octavian, to visit her and to pour forth into her willing ears the sweet words of love she delighted to hear.

Octavian, a handsome youth, sat at the feet of his beloved Princess in an adoring attitude, every now and again rising to draw her into his eager embrace; and the Princess listened indulgently to his extravagant expressions of admiration and adoration—for, in spite of his extreme youth, she loved the boy dearly and delighted in his ardently responsive

passion.

Their golden hours of sweet dreaming this morning, however, were doomed to a rough awakening; for there suddenly came the sound of an arrival in

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the courtyard below, and the Princess exclaimed in deep alarm, as she heard approaching heavy footsteps: "Ah, woe! My husband has returned unexpectedly! Quick, conceal thyself, my beloved Octavian!"

Octavian hastily retired to a cupboard in a recess; and the Princess paced restlessly up and down her room, listening to the voices of her zealous lackeys arguing with the newcomer, whom she soon realised was not her husband, after all, but a near kinsman, the Baron Ochs von Lerchenau, a middle-aged and dissipated roué, for whom she had little affection and less respect.

In a few moments Octavian emerged from the recess, attired in female garments, and entreated the Princess to pass him off to her intruding cousin as a new waiting-maid; and his royal sweetheart, delighted with his charming appearance—for he made an extremely pretty "girl"—and ever ready for a

joke, gladly agreed to do so.

At this moment the visitor burst into the room, angrily expostulating with the dismayed attendants for having kept him waiting outside so long; and seeing that he was indeed her kinsman, the Baron Ochs von Lerchenau, the Princess gave him a gracious welcome and inquired the reason for his unexpected

appearance so early in the morning.

The Baron, however, was immediately so struck with the fair fresh beauty of the dainty "waiting-maid," that he could scarce take his eyes away, and kept casting languishing glances at her, making frequent inviting signs for her to approach nearer to him—to the secret entertainment of the Princess, who more than once had to bid him keep his hands off the "girl," whom she addressed as "Mariandel"; but the flirtatious visitor was at last induced to sit down and state his business whilst partaking of a cup of chocolate.

The Baron now explained to his royal cousin that he had decided to marry, and was, in fact, about to enter into a contract that day with a very young girl named Sophia, the daughter of Faninal, a wealthy merchant who had recently been ennobled; and when the Princess expressed surprise that he should stoop to wed with one of such plebeian origin, he airily confessed that the father's money-bags were of more service to him in his present impecunious state than a long pedigree, declaring that enough blue blood flowed in his own veins for himself and his wife.

The marriage contract was to be signed later during that day; but, in the meantime, he required the services of a noble youth to bear to his promised bride a silver rose as the pledge of his love, in accordance with the pretty custom of such ancient families as his own—and he begged the Princess to name one of their kinsmen for this important mission.

In reply, the Princess bade her "waiting-maid" fetch her a certain jewelled medallion in which was set a miniature of Octavian; and showing the portrait to the Baron, she asked him if he would like the original to perform the office of rose-bearer to his bride-elect, Sophia. The Baron gladly answered in the affirmative, entreating that the matter should forthwith be arranged by the Princess, who agreed to the plan; then, upon gazing more closely at the miniature, he noticed the likeness between the pictured youth and the pretty young "waiting-maid," and his royal cousin informed him that they were, in fact, related, and that though their relationship was not quite "canonical," she nevertheless for that reason chose to keep "Mariandel" always about her own person and away from the other maids.

Once more the Baron tried to make advances to the pretty "Mariandel," inviting her to sup with him that night, and boldly seeking an opportunity to snatch a kiss, to the increasing amusement of the Princess; but Octavian at last managed to make his escape through one of the doors, which he slammed

in the amorous Baron's face.

A stream of attendants, venders of goods, suppliants and servitors now poured into the room through another door; and the Princess, seating herself at the toilet-table, gave herself up into the hands of her hairdresser, who proceeded to arrange her head-dress whilst she listened to the various petitions that were made to her for charity and

The Princess's attorney having entered with the others, the Baron immediately drew the man of law aside and made arrangements with him for the drawing up of his marriage contract; and very soon he was singled out as a likely customer by a couple of disreputable Italians—an uncle and niece, Valachi and Annina-who earned a doubtful living as panderers and by spying, tale-bearing, and finding proofs of scandals. This shady pair of hangers-on were not long ere they found an opportunity of asking the Baron to employ them in his numerous love affairs; and when, at the end of the reception, he retired with the rest of the company, they followed closely upon his heels in the hope of proving their usefulness to him.

The Princess, thus left alone for a few minutes, fell into a pensive mood, reflecting upon the emptiness of the frivolous life around her, and of the only too probable passing of her present happiness; but her reverie was soon broken by the return of Octavian, once more clad in his own male garments, and laughing merrily over the part he had just enacted so cleverly. Soon, however, observing that his beloved one looked sad, he clasped her in his arms in alarm, and begged to know what ailed her; and when the Princess admitted that she feared their love would soon come to an end, since he would almost certainly bestow his affections on some fair young girl sooner or later, he passionately declared that he should never cease to love her, his adored Princess, adding, in extravagant terms, that she had

no equal.

The Princess, however, dismissed him with quiet tenderness, bidding him to hold himself in readiness to do her will and to enact the part of rose-bearer for the Baron; but when he had departed, she remembered with a pang that he had forgotten to kiss her as usual, and she sighed deeply as she realised that her sad thoughts were probably nearer the truth than she had imagined.

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Later in the day great excitement reigned in the household of the newly-ennobled merchant-prince, Herr von Faninal, whose gorgeous palace glowed with decorations of brilliant colours, and whose fair young daughter, Sophia, attired in elegant garments, awaited the arrival of her fiance's rose-bearer—a royal alliance for a merchant's daughter being an achievement to be proud of; so that the worthy Faninal's citizen friends were all envious of what they considered his good luck in having secured so distinguished a son-in-law.

Consequently, all the neighbours were agog with excitement and curiosity to see the arrival of the rose-bearer; and in the reception chamber of the gaudy palace, after the departure of Faninal to meet the bridegroom, the pretty Sophia vainly endeavoured to quell her eager heart-beats by uttering fervent prayers for humility, whilst at the window her fussy duenna, Marianne, interrupted her every minute by drawing attention to the merry doings in the street below, where little groups of curious neighbours were

gathered to watch the arrivals.

Presently, loud greetings and shouts announced the arrival of the eagerly-expected rose-bearer; and, next minute, Octavian, dressed in dazzling garments of silver and white, entered the reception-room, carrying in his hand a lovely silver rose, which, upon his bended knee, he gracefully presented to Sophia. He was followed by a party of elegant attendants, who grouped themselves around the room; but Sophia saw no one but the handsome young Octavian, whose glowing eyes instantly held her own enthralled.

In that first long look the two young people felt themselves transported, as it were, to another world -a rosy world of joy and love, where they two were the only dwellers; and though they gradually came back to the scene around them and talked of ordinary matters, they both felt the glory of a new happiness and knew that love had dawned, unbidden, in their hearts.

Scarcely had they recovered themselves than the doors were once more flung open, and Faninal, with great pomp and ceremony, ushered in the Baron Ochs von Lerchenau, who, in spite of his noble birth, soon showed himself to be nothing but a vulgar boor. He treated the obsequious Faninal first with insolent condescension and next with downright rudeness; and he quickly offended the modest Sophia with the rough boorishness of his wooing and the leering suggestiveness of his bold glances. His coarse words and manners filled the poor girl with disgust; and when he drew her down on to a seat beside him and began to fondle her with easy familiarity, she wrenched herself free from his arms with flaming cheeks, full of indignation, and forbade him to touch her again.

Her resistance, however, vastly amused the licentious Baron, who was now delighted with the loveliness and spirit of his plebeian bride-elect; and he eagerly followed her about the room, in order to force his unwelcome attentions upon her-to the furious anger of Octavian, who only repressed his rage with the utmost difficulty. It was, therefore, a relief to all when Faninal and the notary called the Baron into the adjoining chamber to examine the contract-document before the ceremony of signing

it took place.

The remainder of the guests and attendants followed; and, for a few moments, Octavian and

Sophia were left alone,

Full of despair at the now hideous prospect of the marriage which had been arranged for her, the humiliated Sophia turned to the rose-bearer and tearfully entreated him to help her, declaring that she would never wed with the Baron; and for answer, Octavian clasped her tenderly in his arms, passionately declaring his love for her and vowing to spare her at all costs from the fate she dreaded.

Now full of joy, Sophia gladly responded to the ardent declaration of Octavian, shyly avowing her own love in return; and for a few happy moments the lovers indulged in sweet converse, oblivious of their surroundings and the awkwardness of their

position.

They were quickly reminded of this latter fact, however; for whilst they were still in each other's arms they were disturbed by the sudden appearance of the two Italian scandal-mongers and spies, Valachi and Annina, who had concealed themselves behind a curtain in the hope of hearing something which they could turn to profit.

Delighted with the unexpected discovery they had thus made, the pair now rushed into the adjoining room and excitedly called to the Baron to come and behold his future bride in the arms of a lover.

A number of the guests and attendants hurried into the room, together with the Baron, who, however, laughed at the confusion of Octavian and Sophia, rallying them on their hasty love-making and coarsely declaring himself pleased that his bride should have a lover. He then seized Sophia by the hand and endeavoured to draw her into the next room in order to sign the marriage contract; and when the indignant girl drew back, declaring that she would never wed with him, he tried again and again to drag her into the presence of the notary.

Octavian, now beside himself with rage, bade him unhand the girl at once, declaring that she had no intention of marrying him, notary or no notary; and upon receiving merely an insolent laugh in reply, he drew his sword and furiously challenged the Baron to a duel.

The Baron instantly whistled for his servants; but Octavian compelled him to draw, and, after a couple of passes, wounded him in the arm. The Baron, terrified at his hurt, trifling though it was, dropped his sword at once, and calling for help, made a great fuss, groaning and declaring himself to be nearly killed as the attendants hastened to his side and led him with obsequious solicitude to a couch.

Faninal was soon on the scene, full of perturbation, giving orders for a surgeon to be called, upbraiding Octavian and angrily scolding his daughter, declaring the latter should marry the Baron yet, whether she

would or no.

He politely entreated the rose-bearer to depart, fearful of offending one of such noble birth, yet anxious to be rid of him; and Octavian, seeing that nothing further could be gained at present by remaining, quietly took his departure, after having whispered to Sophia that she would hear from him again very soon.

Sophia was now packed off to her own chamber by her angry parent; and the cowardly Baron, whose cries and groans had diminished somewhat on the arrival of the surgeon, who quickly assured him that he was but slightly hurt, desired to be left alone a while in peace. The fussy Faninal, therefore, drove

all his servants and guests out of the room; and the Baron was left alone.

His rest, however, was almost immediately disturbed by the entrance of the little Italian, Annina, who crept in upon tip-toe and with an air of great secrecy handed to him a note, which she declared came from "Mariandel," the Princess's "waitingmaid." The note stated that "Mariandel" had been better pleased with his lordship's attentions that morning than he supposed, and that she would now gladly accept his invitation to supper that night,

naming a certain inn as the rendezvous, and the time she would be there.

Quite cheered at the thought of having made another conquest, the vain Baron gleefully decided to keep the assignation; but when Annina importunately demanded payment for the zeal she had already shown in his interests, he testily bade her begone, saying he would settle with her later on.

Annina departed therefore sulkily enough, shaking her fist at this unsatisfactory patron; and the Baron was left to rest and indulge in eager anticipation of his coming intrigue, and to make arrangements later with the landlord of the inn for the carrying out of his plans.

Now young Octavian was blessed with an excellent sense of humour; and on thinking matters over, he determined to gain his own ends and to get the better of the Baron by playing on him a merry trick which should lead to the undoing and ridicule of the vain-glorious libertine.

He therefore engaged the services of the two Italian spies; and after having despatched Annina to the Baron with the note from the imaginary "Mariandel," he proceeded to the inn named therein, where he made elaborate arrangements for the carrying out of his joke. He hired several rascally-looking loafers and hid them in various parts of the room he had engaged, giving them instructions to show their villainous faces at signals from himself; and having also sent messengers to Faninal and the Princess, begging them to appear at the inn at a certain time, and made further plans with Annina to enact a part in his little farce, he proceeded to array himself once more in the clothes of "Mariandel," the pretended "waiting-maid," and then sallied forth to meet the amorous Baron.

In a few minutes he returned to the inn leaning on the arm of the latter and pretending to be pleased with his foolish remarks and maudlin love-making. They seated themselves at the supper table; but the Baron was so delighted at his seeming conquest of the pretty and saucy "Mariandel" that he preferred

to make love to her rather than to feast.

But the enticing "waiting-maid," after partaking, under protest, of a glass of wine, pretended to grow sleepy; and when the Baron presently tried to draw her into his arms, he was startled and alarmed by the sudden appearance of strange, evil-looking faces staring at him from various parts of the darkened room.

The apparitions vanished as suddenly as they had appeared; but the Baron soon had another bad fright. Annina now appeared, disguised as a middle-aged lady in deepest mourning garments and accompanied by four young children also garbed in black; and as she flung herself into the arms of the amazed Baron, declaring herself to be his deserted but still loving wife, the little ones clung around his legs and hung on to his coat-tails, calling out plaintively "Papa! Papa! Papa!"

The Baron was furious at this interruption to his pleasure, but was at the same time confused, not remembering which of his many victims of amorous intrigues this particular one could be, and thinking to bluster the matter out, he ran to the window and

called loudly for the watch.

When, however, in answer to his calls, the Chief Commissary of Police appeared, he found himself in a worse predicament than ever, for the Commissary insisted upon asking him many awkward questions, and accused him of having the young girl, "Mariandel" at the inn without the consent of her guardians.

As the now bewildered Baron tried to find a way out of his difficulty his confusion was still further increased by the arrival of Faninal with Sophia; for he had tried to appease the Commissory by declaring his supper companion to be his fiancée. On hearing this statement from the Commissory, Faninal became

so furiously angry at the Baron's conduct that he fell down in a fit and had to be removed to another chamber, where he was attended by Sophia.

Meanwhile, Octavian, having found an opportunity of whispering secretly to the Commissory, retired to a curtained recess, where he hastily discarded his female garments, and presently reappeared in his own

garb, just as the Princess entered the room.

The Baron was now completely nonplussed; for, at this moment, Sophia also returned to announce to him that her father was so disgusted at his loose behaviour that he withdrew his consent to the marriage which had been arranged, and refused to have anything further to do with so disreputable a suitor.

The Princess next stepped forward and explained that the whole of the evening's proceedings had been a hoax—a diversion which had been planned by the young Octavian, his own kinsman and rose-bearer, who had also enacted the part of the pretty "Mariandel"; and finally, the Baron, covered with confusion and ridicule, was obliged to beat a hasty retreat and retire from the neighbourhood altogether.

The Princess now sadly realised that young Octavian's fancy for herself—which she had so foolishly returned with interest—had been swamped by the real love which he had conceived for the fair and charming Sophia; and, generously, she bade him woo the latter, whilst she retired to the inner chamber to secure the consent of Faninal to their

union.

Gladly Octavian clasped Sophia in his arms and poured forth his love vows once more into her willing ear; and soon the joy of the lovers was crowned by the ready approval of Faninal, who was delighted to have thus secured a husband of noble birth for his daughter, after all.

All the party now retired from the inn to join in the rejoicings for the betrothal of Octavian and Sophia; and if, in the midst of the revels and gaieties that ensued, the heart of the Princess was sad, she did not complain, but only sighed regretfully because she had awakened from a fair and rosy dream that had been too sweet to last!

ELEKTRA

Aften the murder of Agamemnon, King of Mycene, by his own Queen, Clytemnestra, and her paramour, Ægisthos, dark days fell to the lot of the Princesses of the land; for their unnatural mother, after marrying her guilty lover, was determined not to endure the just reproaches of her children, and, therefore, degraded them to the rank of slaves, so that they

might be kept out of her sight.

Her son, the young Prince Orestes, she had tried to slay at the time of the King's murder; but he had been saved from sharing the same terrible fate by the timely help of his sister, Elektra. He had, however, been forced to leave the country, and had taken refuge in Phocis, where he remained for seven years, awaiting a favourable opportunity to return to Mycene and take vengeance upon his mother and her lover by slaying them both.

Meanwhile, his sisters, Elektra and Chrysosthemis, were enduring great hardships in the palace at Mycene, where, after being degraded to the level of the slaves, they were subjected to many indignities. But worse than their own personal sufferings was the grief in their hearts, not only for the untimely death of their beloved father, but for the banishment of their brother, for whose return they longed passion-

ately.

In the heart of Chrysosthemis, grief and the longing for freedom only reigned; but in the heart of Elektra the desire for vengeance against her mother had obsessed every other natural feeling, and she

only lived for the consummation of the vengeance

she believed the gods would surely grant her.

She longed even more than did her sister for the return of their brother, Orestes, whom she intended to use as her instrument of justice; but when seven years had gone by she began to lose hope of his assistance. Her thirst for revenge, however, had not diminished one iota, but had increased with the years, having grown to be so completely a part of her being that she lived only to see it accomplished; and when, at the end of seven years, Orestes was still absent, she determined to carry out her fell design without him.

Though for the purposes of her intended crime, she endeavoured to hide her savage passion from the curious eyes around her, she could not altogether conceal it; and the light of burning hate which shone in her eyes when she gazed upon the guilty King and Queen was seen and marked by many. She was carefully shunned by her slave companions—all save one, who still kept to her allegiance and suffered the blows of her fellows for so doing—who despised her for the degraded position she had been forced into, and spoke against her haughty behaviour and denunciatory words; and Clytemnestra herself went in secret fear of her wrathful daughter, and avoided her presence as much as possible.

One day, when seven years had gone by and still there came no signs of Orestes, Elektra's passionate feelings so far overcame her that she at last resolved to carry out vengeance upon the murderers of her royal father ere another sun should rise; and to this end she sought the assistance of her sister, who was physically stronger than herself and could, therefore,

use a weapon with surer effect.

Chrysosthemis, however, was of a far gentler nature, and instead of having nursed feelings of vengeance in her heart during the seven dark years that had passed, she only desired freedom from her enforced servitude and the protecting care which a husband's love would give to her; and, full of horror at Elektra's bloodthirsty designs, she entreated her to put away such terrible thoughts from her mind, declaring that their guilty mother already suspected her designs and would presently cause her to be cast into prison.

Hearing the Queen even now approaching, Chrysosthemis departed, entreating her sister to accompany her; but Elektra was not afraid, and she determined to disarm suspicion from her mother's

mind by holding flattering talk with her.

When Clytemnestra presently appeared, therefore, she addressed her in respectful tones, as though speaking to a goddess; and the Queen, completely deceived, desired her attendants to withdraw that she might talk alone with her seemingly humbled daughter, heedless of their whispered words of warn-

ing to her against the latter.

When the slaves had retired, Clytemnestra, who had a hunted frightened look in her eyes, told the ragged Princess that she had been troubled with terrible dreams, and asked advice for recovering her peace of mind; and Elektra, in a tone of deep mystery, declared that this could only be attained by the sacrifice of a woman—the deed to be done by a man who must be of noble nature and not base as

was Ægisthos.

Immediately Clytemnestra guessed who was in the mind of Elektra—her own son, Orestes, of whom she went in constant fear, believing him to be still alive; and Elektra, realising from her mother's sudden look of fear that she had never received definite news of the death of Orestes, though she had caused false reports of the same to be given to her daughters, now flung off her pretended mood of mildness, and once more furiously denounced the Queen as a murderess and declared that vengeance would surely fall upon her.

Clytemnestra shrank back in terror before her daughter's torrent of passionate words; but at that

moment one of her attendants returned and informed her that a messenger had just arrived and had brought with him a report that Orestes was indeed dead.

Relieved by this, to her, welcome news, Clytemnestra retired to her own chamber with a laugh of triumphant scorn; and soon afterwards Chrysosthemis ran weeping to Elektra, telling her of the report of their brother's death which had been given to her by the slave who had been sent by the Queen

to inform Ægisthos of the fact.

Though stricken with woe at this confirmation of her own fear, Elektra once more earnestly entreated the help of her sister in carrying out her scheme of vengeance against the murderers of their father, telling her that she had already in hiding the great axe with which the guilty pair had done the fell deed; but though she promised her great honours and many gifts afterwards, and even offered to become her slave, Chrysosthemis only trembled with horror at the idea of slaying her own mother, and, utterly refusing to take part in so terrible a crime, she rushed away, followed by the curses of Elektra, who, obsessed by her one desire for vengeance to the exclusion of every other natural emotion, now resolved to carry out her purpose alone and unaided.

As she moved away stealthily to unearth the hidden axe with which she intended to deal the fatal blow, she was accosted by a stranger, who, noting her ragged and humble attire, mistook her for one of the slaves, and addressed her as such; and when the Princess haughtily demanded his business, he informed her that he was the messenger who had come to announce the death of the young Prince, Orestes, declaring that he had been servant to the

latter and had witnessed his end.

Full of grief and anger, Elektra passionately reproached the travel-worn messenger for being so poor-spirited as to be yet alive himself to bring news of the death of the Prince, for whom he should have been ready to give his own life; and the stranger, realising from her noble bearing and poignant grief that she could be no slave but must be of some kin to the person of whom they spoke, now asked her name.

On learning that it was the Princess Elektra who stood before him, the stranger seemed deeply moved; and he drew closer and whispered into her ears the

words: "Orestes lives!"

At this moment, a party of the late King's own body-servants appeared, and, kneeling before the stranger, greeted him as their prince and master.

Thus realising that it was her own long-absent and dearly-loved brother, Orestes, who stood before her, Elektra greeted him joyfully; and the young Prince's brow darkened with deep anger when he learned from her of the degradation to which she and her sister had been subjected during his enforced absence.

Orestes also desired above all things to avenge the death of his father—having, in fact, spread the false reports of his own death in order to deceive Clytemnestra and Ægisthos into a mistaken sense of security from him, their most dreaded enemy; and he gladly agreed to Elektra's eager request for him to assist her

by slaying the guilty pair.

Producing the great axe which her own weak arms would have failed to wield, the Princess quickly led Orestes to their mother's chamber; and as, next moment, Clytemnestra's screams brought forth her attendants and the Princess Chrysosthemis upon the scene, Elektra stood aside with a triumphant air upon her face, gloating over the fact that the vengeance for which she had lived was at last accomplished.

Ægisthos, rushing into the chamber as the Queen's dying groans pierced the air, was himself met by the avenging Orestes, who instantly dealt him his death-blow; and thus were the murderers of Agamem-

non brought to justice by his own son.

The people of Mycene all rejoiced greatly at the deaths of the guilty King and Queen, who had ruled

them with much tyranny; and they hailed Orestes at once as their new King with the wildest enthusiasm, greeting him lustily as he presently appeared in their midst.

Chrysosthemis at once joined her brother as he received the acclamations of the people; but Elektra, in her passionate exultation at the consummation of her long-desired vengeance, sang first a hymn of thanksgiving to the gods, and then began to execute

a marvellous dance of triumph.

All the people ceased their greetings to Orestes and watched the exultant Princess with bated breath, held spellbound as they followed her wild and fantastic movements; but, heedless of them all, Elektra worked herself up into a mad frenzy of triumph, her dance growing ever wilder and wilder, until, at last, utterly exhausted and spent, she fell lifeless at the feet of the new King.

MIGNON

One festal day, a lively scene was taking place in the streets of a certain little German country town; for gay crowds of holiday-makers had all turned out in their bravest attire to make merry from morn till night. A troupe of gipsy mountebanks had just arrived in the town, and seeing that a holiday was in progress, they had quickly set about regaling the idle populace with an impromptu entertainment. A merry crowd soon gathered around them, and loud bursts of applause greeted the efforts of the gipsies, who accompanied their wild songs and fantastic dances with the twanging of guitars and tambourines.

Amongst these spectators was one who seemed almost regardless of the gay scene before him: a noble-looking old man with long grey elf-locks, whose shabby, way-worn garments, and a harp which he carried, proclaimed him to be a wandering minstrel. There was a look of unutterable grief in this old man's eyes, together with a strange restless gleam, as though the soul within sought constantly for some beloved object it never could find; and every now and again he would break forth into wild snatches of song, full of heart-broken sadness, which were received by the by-standers with good-humoured indulgence, for old Lothario the Harper was a familiar figure to them, and it was well known that some great sorrow had rendered him half-crazed.

The gipsy mountebanks found their audience an appreciative one; and seeing that the impromptu entertainment was likely to prove profitable, the chief, a fierce-looking rascal named Giarno, announced that

Mignon, the fairest and most talented of their gipsy maidens, would now give an exhibition of the famous egg-dance. So saying, he thrust forward a beautiful young girl, in whose soft dark eyes fear and scornful resistance seemed struggling for the mastery; and it was soon plain to all that she regarded the lusty Giarno as a cruel tyrant, whom she was at last determined to defy, for, upon being bidden by him to commence her dance, she utterly refused to do so.

Alas, poor Mignon! Of noble birth, she had been stolen from her home in early childhood by the gipsies with whom she had been brought up; and Giarno the Mountebank, seeing in her beauty and grace a means of attracting audiences and securing gain, had compelled her to dance in the streets of every town and village they passed through, frequently beating her cruelly when, through fatigue

or misery, she failed to please him.

For many years the poor child, through fear of her harsh master, was forced to obey his will; but as she advanced to maidenhood, all her natural highborn instincts of refinement and modesty revolted against the publicity of the life she was compelled to lead, and now, at last, she determined to resist. Outraged by the free glances of admiration cast upon her by the careless gallants in the crowd, she shrank back and tried to escape, and when Giarno roughly seized her by the arms and angrily ordered her again to dance, she announced boldly that she would not perform. Enraged at her refusal, the fierce Giarno seized his stick, and declared that he would beat her unless she obeyed him instantly; but, in spite of his threats, brave little Mignon still declined to do his bidding.

The old harper, Lothario, had been watching this scene with eager interest, feeling himself drawn to the pretty Mignon by some unaccountable attraction; and on seeing the poor girl shrink back from the upraised arm of her tyrant master, he hurried for-

ward, calling out as he approached: "Courage,

maiden! I will protect you!

Before he reached her side, however, a second defender arrived upon the scene: a handsome youth, who, rushing forward and snatching the stick from Giarno's hand, bade him promise instantly not to harm the gipsy girl, as he valued his life. Cowed by this sudden onslaught, the bully drew back, muttering apologetically that he did but seek additional gains by the performance of his dancing-girl; but upon receiving from his assailant a few coins in compensation for his loss, he was contented, and withdrew with Mignon from the crowd.

The bold cavalier who had thus so timely come to the rescue of the pretty gipsy maid was a Viennese student, by name Wilhelm Meister, who, being young, rich, and gay, was for the time being amusing himself by travelling from place to place, being eager to see the world and engage in the excitements of youth. His natural generosity and kindly pity had led him to interfere on Mignon's behalf; and now, as he strolled away to a refreshment garden near by, he felt elated by his encounter, and longed for further

adventures.

Now it happened that the whole of this little scene had been witnessed from a balcony opposite by two strangers to the town—an actor named Laertes, and Filina, his leading lady, an actress of much beauty, and fascinating but coquettish manners; and being greatly struck by the handsome appearance and gallant behaviour of Wilhelm Meister, the lady desired to make his acquaintance, hoping to add him to her already long list of admirers.

Consequently, the two made their way to the refreshment gardens; and here Laertes soon entered into friendly conversation with Wilhelm, telling him of the misfortunes of the strolling theatrical company to which he belonged, and of the attractive charms

of the lively Filina.

Wilhelm was greatly amused by the exaggerated

conversation of the actor; and when he was presently introduced to Filina, he was so delighted with the sparkling looks of the fair actress that he quickly fell under the spell of her fascinations. He walked about with her for some time; and when she at length left him, he determined to see her again, in spite of the fact that Laertes had warned him that she was

a born coquette.

As he came away from the garden, he met the gipsy troupe once more; and suddenly catching sight of her defender, the grateful Mignon sprang forward at once, and kissing his hand, began to pour forth heart-felt thanks for his protection of her. Wilhelm was touched by her simple gratitude, and began to question her, being struck by her refinement and ethereal beauty; and then Mignon told him her pitiful little story, how she had been stolen by the gipsies when scarcely more than a babe, and how harshly she had been treated by them since.

She could remember little of her early life, except that one terrible day, when playing near the brink of a clear blue lake, she had been suddenly seized and borne off by the lawless Bohemians; but her memory being stirred by the questions put to her, she presently broke out into a rapturous recollection of her native country, describing it as a land of orange-trees and roses, of soft breezes and everlasting blue skies, from which Wilhelm gathered her home

to have been in Italy.

Whilst they were talking together, the mountebank, Giarno, approached, and remarking that Wilhelm seemed to have taken a fancy to Mignon, he suggested that the young student should buy the girl's freedom, paying him a ransom for her, upon receipt of which he would renounce all rights in his favour. Eager to rescue the poor girl from so harsh a master, Wilhelm gladly agreed to the proposal, paying over to the gipsy a hundred ducats at once; and Giarno quickly departed, rejoicing at the good bargain he had made. Mignon, delighted at the thought of her freedom, again poured forth grateful thanks upon her benefactor, for whom a passionate love, excited by his generosity and pity, was already springing up in her maiden heart, and then, turning to old Lothario the Harper, who was also hovering near, still attracted by some deep feeling he could not fathom, she begged

him to rejoice with her.

Leaving the now happy girl with Lothario, Wilhelm strolled back to the gardens, where he was soon joined again by Filina and Laertes, who announced that they had just received the news of an important engagement. A certain Baron Rosenberg, who was entertaining a company of noble guests at his castle in the neighbourhood, had instructed the strolling players to perform at a splendid fête he was giving in their honour; and Filina, determined not to be parted from her new admirer, now suggested that Wilhelm should accompany them as poet attached to the company.

Wilhelm, just ripe for such an adventure as this, and dazzled by the charms of the coquettish Filina, with whom he already fancied himself in love, readily agreed to the proposal, promising to join them at the fête; and when the two players had departed, he returned to Lothario and Mignon, telling the latter that he intended to place her with some worthy people in the town, who would watch over her welfare.

But Mignon, already passionately devoted to her benefactor, whom she persisted in regarding as her master, implored him not to send her away from him; and she begged hard to be permitted to accompany him on his travels in the disguise of a page, that she might serve him wherever he went.

Wilhelm shook his head, gently removing her clinging hands from his arm; and the old harper now came forward and offered to be her guardian, declaring that if she would roam with him, he would

watch over her with loving care.

Then Wilhelm, seeing the look of disappointment

and grief upon the sweet face of the gipsy girl, relented, and, touched by her devotion, said that she might remain with him for the present, if she chose.

So when, some days later, the young student, after completing his preparations, set off for the Castle of Rosenberg, Mignon joyfully accompanied him in the garb of a page; and old Lothario, determined to keep a watch over the beautiful maiden whose appearance so strangely moved him, followed to the same neighbourhood, that he might be near at hand should harm befall her.

Upon arriving at the castle, Wilhelm quickly obtained admission to the suite of handsome apartments that had been allotted to the fair Filina, who, as the favourite "Star" of the theatrical company, was receiving every mark of attention and admiration from the Baron and his distinguished guests; and the charming actress greeted him with such evident pleasure that the young student, intoxicated by her subtle witcheries, was filled with delight.

The timid Mignon, after being received with coldness and laughing scorn by the actress, retired to a recess at the far end of the boudoir; and as she heard her beloved benefactor's protestations of admiration and regard for the gay pleasure-seeker before him, a dull, hopeless pain came into her heart, for she felt that she, the poor gipsy maid, could never hope to share in the sunshine of his love.

She wondered childishly whether she could ever make herself sufficiently like Filina to attract him; and when the pretty actress presently departed to the salon with Wilhelm, she determined to try the

experiment.

Finding herself alone in the room, she drew forth one of Filina's gorgeous robes, and arrayed herself in it; and then, sitting before the mirror, she began to enhance her delicate complexion with the various accessories to beauty used by the artful coquette, laughing with delight at her altered appearance, Suddenly, however, she heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and fearing to be discovered in her borrowed finery, she sprang into an adjoining room, just as the intruder entered the boudoir.

The newcomer was a foppish youth, named Frederick, nephew to Baron Rosenberg, who, wishing to pose as an admirer of the fascinating Filina, had now come to pay his court, expecting to find her alone; but no sooner had he entered the room than he was followed by Wilhelm, who had returned to speak with Mignon, whom he was about to send back to the town at the request of Filina.

Recognising in Frederick a young gallant whom he had seen before in the town with the pretty actress, Wilhelm demanded to be told his business; and Frederick, knowing the handsome student to be his most formidable rival, instantly provoked a quarrel with him, and furiously drew his sword.

Wilhelm, to humour the youth, who was little more than a boy, and whose attempted gallantry amused him, playfully drew his sword also; but at this moment, Mignon rushed from the inner chamber,

and flung herself between them.

Quickly seeing that a duel had never been seriously intended—Frederick having already sheathed his sword in evident relief—Mignon, suddenly remembering her borrowed plumes, began to make a shame-faced apology for her folly; but Wilhelm gently took her aside, and told her that they must now part, since he had quite decided to send her back to the town.

Filina, who had followed her admirer into the room, mockingly added that since the gipsy maid had taken a fancy to the dress she had adorned herself with, she might keep it; but Mignon, stung by the laughing scorn of her rival, and rendered desperate by Wilhelm's decision, furiously tore the gauzy robe to ribbons, and rushed away in a tempest of tears and angry feelings.

Wilhelm, astonished at this outburst of jealousy on

the part of Mignon—whom until now he had regarded as a child—suddenly felt an awakened interest in her, and began to wonder at the depth of passion she had betrayed; but as the evening fête was now about to commence, he departed to witness the performance.

The play chosen for representation that night was A Midsummer Night's Dream; and Filina, in the character of "Titania," won golden opinions from one and all. In her dainty fairy garments she bewitched the hearts of her audience by her charming acting and fascinating coquetry, and the old castle walls rang with the loud bursts of applause that were constantly

accorded to the lovely actress.

Meanwhile poor Mignon, having passionately torn off her borrowed finery, and donned her own old gipsy garments once more, had flown from the castle, and made her way to the bank of a lonely lake in the grounds; and here, overcome by the grief of her hopeless love, and rendered frantic by the bursts of applause in praise of Filina that ever and anon reached her, she was just about to throw herself into the water, when she suddenly heard the sad, yet entrancing sounds of a harp played close at hand.

Turning round, she beheld Lothario the Harper, who had been hovering in the castle grounds all evening; and thus saved from her terrible resolve by his timely appearance, the unhappy girl calmed herself, and poured forth the whole story of her grief

into the sympathising ears of the old man.

Leading her gently back to the illuminated grounds, Lothario soothed his companion as best he could, feeling strangely that her sorrows were his own; and when, carried away by her jealous emotions on hearing another loud burst of applause ring out upon the evening air, Mignon uttered a rash wish that the building in which her rival now triumphed might suddenly burst into flames, a curious gleam came into the old harper's wild eyes, and he left her side at once.

In a few minutes he returned, and told her exultingly that, in accordance with her desire, he had set the castle on fire, and that the flames would soon burst forth; but before Mignon could fully grasp the meaning of what her half-witted friend had done to prove his zeal on her behalf, the festive entertainment came to an end, and guests and performers alike came out into the illuminated grounds to refresh

themselves in the cool evening air.

The praises of Filina were being sung on every side, and as the triumphant actress came forth on the arm of Wilhelm, she was received with great enthusiasm. Wilhelm soon noticed Mignon standing in the gloom with Lothario, and hurrying forward, he greeted her with tenderness, for, alarmed at her prolonged absence, he had been searching for her. Filina, hating to see the two together, soon joined them, and desired Mignon to return to the theatre and fetch a bouquet she had left upon the stage; and Mignon, her despair brought back by the voice of Wilhelm, hurried into the doomed castle at once, remembering Lothario's words, and hoping to be overcome by the fumes within.

The interior of the castle was already burning fiercely; and as the startled guests suddenly saw flames bursting out from the building they had just

left, they rejoiced at their own safety.

But Mignon was within the burning castle; and quickly realising her danger, Wilhelm, with a cry of horror, dashed through the smoking doorway to seek for her. Struggling against the fumes and suffocating heat, he made his way to the theatre, and finding Mignon lying half-dazed upon the already burning stage, he snatched her up in his arms, and, despite her frantic pleading that she might be left to her fate, bore her triumphantly through the blinding smoke into the safety of the grounds beyond.

Here he was quickly joined by Lothario, upon whom he saw that the recent excitement had had the effect of restoring his reason to its normal balance and clearness, for, to his surprise, the old harper presently announced in cool, decided tones his intention of conveying the unconscious girl to the palace of Cipriani in Italy, where he had influence to secure

her every attention and care.

Seeing that Lothario was in earnest, and would not be diverted from his purpose, Wilhelm agreed to help the old man in conveying Mignon to Italy; for he now felt drawn to the beautiful young girl more closely than ever, and already his passing fancy for the frivolous coquette, Filina, was dying away.

So with every care and tenderness the old man and his young companion bore the hapless Mignon to Italy; but upon arriving at the palace of Cipriani—a stately building upon the borders of a beautiful lake—the poor girl fell into a fever, brought on by the dangerous excitement and mental suffering she had

lately endured.

Wilhelm found to his astonishment that the directions and commands of Lothario were all obeyed by the servants of the palace as though the old harper were their master, but he scarce found time even to wonder at this, for all his thoughts were now centred on the suffering Mignon. In her delirium, the poor girl constantly breathed his name, thus betraying her passionate love for him; and as Wilhelm gazed upon the sweet, pale face of the fair maiden he had rescued, and remembered her wonderful devotion and gratitude to him, an answering passion, deep and tender, gradually awakened within his own breast. So, one day, when at last Mignon had sufficiently recovered to be brought into a large, sunny room overlooking the sparkling lake, the young student told her of his love, and Mignon's faithful heart was filled with joy and sweet content.

Whilst the two lovers were rejoicing together, Lothario entered the room; but instead of his old familiar, way-worn garments, they saw, to their surprise, that he was now clothed in rich attire, and moved with the proud bearing of a noble. He greeted them in courtly tones, and in answer to their astonished looks, introduced himself as the owner of the palace in which they now resided, the Count of Cipriani, whose only child, Sperata, had been stolen from him many years ago.

He then told them that, half-crazed with grief at the loss of his child, he had wandered forth in the garb of a harper from city to city and country to country, in search of his darling; and for fifteen years he had never once given up the hope of finding

her at last.

From the first time of seeing Mignon, he had felt unaccountably drawn to her, for her features had reminded him of his dead wife; and now, after having heard from Wilhelm the story she had told to him of her early recollections, he had come to prove that the

gipsy girl was indeed his own long-lost child.

As he spoke, the Count produced a casket, and drew from it a girdle, which he said had been almost constantly worn by his little Sperata; and at the sound of this name, a chord of memory was struck in the heart of Mignon, and she eagerly drew forth another relic from the casket. This was a little prayer-book, from which the Count said his lost child had always spelled her evening prayer; and Mignon, in whose breast a stream of sweet recollections now rushed, closed her eyes, and repeated from memory, in soft, clear tones, the same simple childish prayer that was contained in the book.

Satisfied at having thus proved beyond a doubt that the beautiful girl before him was indeed his own beloved daughter, Count Lothario clasped her in his arms with great joy; and then, placing her hand in that of Wilhelm, he bestowed his blessing upon them both.

The soft breezes and warm sunshine of her native land soon brought Mignon back to health once more; and then, restored to the arms of a devoted parent, and enraptured by the possession of Wilhelm's love, she quickly forgot her troubled past, and looked forward to a future of happiness and peace.

EUGENE ONEGIN

It was a warm evening in the late autumn, and Frau Larina, a wealthy landowner in Russia, was sitting in the garden of her beautiful country house, busily engaged upon the homely task of peeling fruit, in which she was assisted by an old nurse named Philipjewna. Through the open windows of the mansion close by came the sound of the sweet singing of her two fair young daughters, Olga and Tatiana; and as she listened to their song, the mother's heart was filled with sympathy and tender recollection, for the song was one she had herself sung in the days of her youth.

Darkness was fast closing around, and presently a band of merry peasants came trooping into the grounds, carrying sheaves of corn, which they presented to Frau Larina, for to-day was the last of the Harvest, and they had come to lay their customary tribute at the feet of their Lady Benefactress.

Frau Larina received the peasants with great kindness, inviting them to sing and dance before her and to partake of the refreshment she had ordered to be prepared for them. So the lively youths and maidens, in spite of weariness after their long day's toil, began to go through the mazy figures of a country dance upon the moonlit lawn, singing a merry harvest song as an accompaniment.

On hearing the song of the peasants, Olga and Tatiana came out into the garden and stood beside their mother, listening to the singing and watching

the dance with interest.

The two sisters, though both fair to look upon,



presented a great contrast to each other; for whereas the elder, Olga, was light-hearted, matter-of-fact, and frivolous, loving gaiety and amusement, Tatiana, on the other hand, was dreamy, romantic and retiring, caring little for the usual excitements of youth, but preferring to wander off alone to read in solitude, or indulge in day-dreams.

This difference in disposition was shown now, as they emerged from the house; for Olga, exhilarated by the lively music, was ready enough to join the peasants in their merry dance, but Tatiana, in whom the music had awakened more romantic thoughts, retired to a quiet corner of the terrace to read a favourite book, and to enjoy the beauty of the night.

Seeing that her young daughter was more than usually quiet and dreamy this evening, Frau Larina, with motherly solicitude, approached to inquire if all was well with her; but Tatiana declared that nothing ailed her, and that she was but deeply

interested in her book and musings.

When the peasants had finished their dance, they trooped away again to partake of their patroness's hospitality; and immediately after, a carriage drove up, from which alighted two gentlemen who lived in the neighbourhood. These were Vladimir Lenski, a young nobleman who was betrothed to Olga, and his friend, Eugene Onegin, who, although he owned land in the neighbourhood, yet was unknown to Frau Larina and her daughters.

At sight of the stranger, the shy and timid Tatiana would have retired to the house, but was detained by her mother; and a few moments later, Lenski came forward to greet the ladies, at the same time intro-

ducing his friend.

Onegin was a handsome man, who had seen much of the world, and possessed an interesting and fascinating personality; and as the impressionable Tatiana lifted her timid eyes and gazed shyly upon him, she was strangely attracted by him, feeling that he was the very impersonation of the romantice

hero of her girlish dreams. Onegin, too, was interested in the pensive girl, who was more to his taste than the laughing Olga; and entering into conversation with her, they presently strolled into the garden together, leaving Lenski and his fiancée to their own sweet devices.

Lenski was overjoyed at finding himself alone with his beloved Olga, and poured forth passionate protestations of devotion into her ear, which, although she received them with merry bantering, were nevertheless pleasing to his fiancée; and the time passed

all too quickly for the happy lovers.

Presently, however, Frau Larina interrupted this pretty scene by bidding them to the evening meal, which was now ready; and as the lovers retired to the house, Tatiana and Onegin emerged from the garden, deep in conversation, and passed in after them.

Tatiana, in spite of her shyness, had found intense enjoyment in the society of Onegin; and although his conversation revealed him to be a world-weary cynic, with little belief in human goodness, yet his personality thrilled her to her utmost being, and her heart throbbed wildly with a strange delirious joy that would not be suppressed. As the night advanced, this sudden passion grew more and more intensified; and when at last she retired to her chamber, her agitation was so great that she could restrain her feelings no longer.

The old nurse, who had accompanied her to attend to her wants, endeavoured to soothe the young girl, seeing that she was over-wrought; but she found her task a hard one, for Tatiana insisted on hearing the story of Philipjewna's own love and betrothal, and was not to be diverted from this all-enthralling subject. So, to satisfy her young mistress, the old nurse described the events connected with her marriage, which were prosaic and unromantic enough; since, according to the usual custom of the Russian peasantry, a husband was chosen for her, and she was

bidden to wed him, the short courtship being a mere matter of form, and the question of love having noth-

ing whatever to do with the transaction.

Tatiana, however, paid little heed to the story she had asked for, being too much engrossed with her own conflicting emotions; and as the recital came to an end, she desired the old nurse to bring writing materials into the room, and then retire.

Philipjewna, thinking it best to humour the young girl, obeyed her behest at once; and having placed writing materials on the table, she kissed her nursling tenderly, and left the room, hoping that sleep and pleasant dreams would restore her to calm-

ness by the morning.

But sleep was very far from the thoughts of the agitated Tatiana; for, unable to restrain her feelings any longer, she had determined to write a letter to Eugene Onegin, to confess the passionate love she had conceived for him, and to ask him to grant her a meeting in the grounds next day. For a long time conflicting thoughts assailed her, maidenly modesty and natural reticence struggling with her new-born love and the longing desire to have it returned; but at length the intensity of her passion overcame all other feelings, and, seizing a pen, she began to write. But even now, when her decision was made, she found it a difficult task to put her overwhelming thoughts upon the paper; and many were the sheets she destroyed, and the new attempts she made.

The night crept on, but Tatiana was heedless of the passing hours; and at length, as the first signs of dawn appeared, she finished the letter, and, with trembling hands and much misgiving, placed it in an

envelope ready to be delivered.

The letter was characteristic of the girl's disposition, and every line breathed of the sweet trustfulness that had prompted its writing. It was the simple outpouring of a generous, beautiful nature, and the depth and intensity of passion it revealed but proved the value of the gift offered—the gift of a

pure young maiden's heart.

Having sealed the letter, Tatiana went up to the window, and, drawing aside the curtains, pensively watched the rosy dawn of another beautiful autumn morning; and a short time afterwards Philipjewna came in to awaken her, according to her usual custom. Amazed to find her young mistress already risen, the old nurse hurried forward to greet her, noticing with alarm that the bed had not been slept in; but Tatiana, scarcely waiting for her greeting, hastily placed the letter she had written in her hands, and nervously entreated her to have it conveyed to Eugene Onegin without delay.

At first the nurse hesitated, knowing that this was an extraordinary request; but seeing that the girl was still in a state of nervous excitement, she again thought it best to humour her, so took the note and promised to have it delivered at once. As soon as Philipjewna had left the room, Tatiana buried her face in her hands, half-regretting that she had sent the letter, and wondering if Onegin would grant her the appointment she had asked for, first hoping that he would come, and the next moment praying that

he would not.

However, later in the day, as the time appointed for the meeting drew near, she gathered her courage together, and went out into the grounds, with doubt and longing in her heart, trembling at the thought of what the result of her interview would be, fearing lest her love should be scorned, yet equally full of shy fears should it be returned.

As she appeared in the grounds, she found that a group of village maidens were continuing their harvest festivities by indulging in further merry songs and dances on the lawn; but presently they departed to another part of the grounds, leaving Tatiana alone, and a few moments later Eugene Onegin ap-

peared and hurried towards her.

At the sight of the man she loved so passionately,

Tatiana's little stock of courage entirely forsook her, leaving her trembling like an aspen leaf, and she would certainly have run away again, had not Onegin imperiously bidden her to remain. Then, drawing nearer to the agitated girl, he told her gently that he had received and read her letter, and since she had been so frank with him, he would, in return, be frank with her.

He then went on to declare in passionless tones, yet half-regretfully, that he was too world-weary to accept the fresh young love she had to offer, and was neither worthy to receive so generous a gift,

nor had he a like passion to offer in return.

As the trembling Tatiana listened to these cold, yet truthful words, each one of which stabbed her to the heart, she felt crushed to the earth; and, overcome with grief and shame, she buried her face in her hands. Onegin, sorry for the pain he was thus inflicting upon the heart of this romantic girl, now bade her, in a more tender tone than he had yet used, to restrain her feelings, since another, less conscientious than himself, might use such impulsiveness for his own selfish ends; and then, taking her by the hand, he led her into the house as though she had been a little child.

A short time after this, Frau Larina gave a splendid ball in honour of Tatiana's eighteenth birthday, and all the élite of the neighbourhood were invited to join in the festivities, prominent amongst the guests

being Lenski and Eugene Onegin.

The entertainment was an elegant one, and the assemblage brilliant; but Onegin found it dull, and was frankly bored. He passed most of his time with Tatiana, for the romantic girl still interested him; but Tatiana was restless and silent, and at last he left her to her own reflections, seeing that she seemed ill at ease with him.

Being now more bored than ever, he felt annoyed with Lenski for having persuaded him to come; and presently the spirit of mischief suggested a means for paying off this small grudge against his friend. Seeing the pretty smiling Olga approaching at the moment, he invited her to dance with him several times, including the cotillion she had promised to her fiancé, and Olga, being by nature a daring coquette, gaily accepted his attentions with such evident pleasure, that Lenski's brow grew black with disappointment and jealousy, for he loved her passionately, and could brook no rival in his affections. Full of gloom, he watched the pair as they danced through the intricate figures, noting with increasing anger the many roguish glances bestowed by the coquettish Olga upon her partner; and when the cotillion came to an end, unable to restrain his feelings any longer, he openly accused Onegin of endeavouring to steal away the affections of his fiancée, and before all the guests, he furiously challenged him to give him satisfaction and fight with him on the morrow.

At first, Onegin tried to laugh the matter off, declaring that he had no thought of doing his friend a wrong; and Olga, now frightened and full of remorse that her giddy conduct should have thus been the means of causing strife, also implored her fiancé to calm himself and think no more of the matter.

But Lenski's jealous passion would brook no interference; and he continued to pour such angry reproaches and stinging taunts upon Onegin, that the latter at length lost control of himself also, and, goaded beyond bearing, angrily accepted the challenge. The guests, alarmed and dismayed, at once took a hurried departure, and the ball, which had commenced so brightly, ended in confusion and gloom.

Early next morning, Lenski and Onegin, with their seconds, met in a retired part of the grounds, and there, with all the usual ceremonious etiquette, the duel was fought. Both felt sad at the thought that their long and happy friendship should end in this terrible way, and longed to utter the one word

that would have reconciled them; but pride kept their lips sealed, and when the signal was given, they raised their pistols and fired instantaneously.

Lenski fell to the ground at once; and when Onegin, who was untouched, ran forward with the seconds, and clasped him in his arms, he found to his

horror that he was dead.

Full of grief and remorse that he had thus for the sake of a foolish code of honour slain the dearest friend of his youth, Onegin, dazed and miserable, left the neighbourhood at once; and for several years afterwards he wandered restlessly from country to country, in the vain endeavour to drown the tormenting regrets and harrowing recollections that haunted his brain.

But neither change of scene nor wildest adventure could succeed in bringing any comfort or peace to his wounded and remorseful heart; and at last, overruled by an irresistible longing to return to the scene of his trouble, he travelled to Russia once more, and upon arriving in St Petersburg, was sought out by his old friends, and induced to remain there for a while. On receiving an invitation to a magnificent ball from one of his near relations, Prince Gremin, a nobleman of high position and honours, he was persuaded to accept this; and when the evening arrived, he proceeded to attend the function, though very much against his will.

But even such a brilliant scene as this could not bring distraction to the torn and weary heart of Eugene Onegin; and as he wandered restlessly from room to room, his self-accusing thoughts still haunted him, and the memory of the fatal duel was again pictured in his mind as vividly as ever. Presently, however, he noticed a stir among the guests, and a subdued murmur of admiration; and following their gaze, he saw that the centre of attraction was a beautiful young woman, richly clad, and sparkling with jewels, who was passing from one group to another with easy dignity, bestowing smiles and

gracious words on all. A second glance told Onegin that this brilliant figure was Tatiana, the young daughter of Frau Larina, the romantic maiden who had so impulsively offered him her fresh girlish love a few years ago; Tatiana, no longer a dreamy child, but grown up into a lovely, soulful woman, gracious and self-controlled, a very queen even amidst this dazzling array of fair women.

It was indeed Tatiana, who had been taken from her quiet country home to become the admired wife of Prince Gremin, who, though many years older than she, yet loved her tenderly, and did all in his power to make her happy; and the fair young girl, though she could not give him love, yet made him a dutiful and devoted wife, and soon learned to bear

her exalted position with becoming dignity.

Now, as Onegin gazed once again upon Tatiana, always interesting to him, but doubly so in her matured beauty, with all her natural charms of mind, body and disposition intensified a hundredfold, his heart suddenly throbbed with a new and strange feeling of exaltation, and he who had thought himself dead to all passion, felt his pulses quicken and a thrill of the keenest joy pass like an electric current

through his whole being.

His emotion increased presently when Prince Gremin brought his beautiful young wife forward, and introduced her to him with pride and affection; for although Tatiana greeted him with easy calm and even coldness, making no attempt to hide their former acquaintance, yet the intense look of repressed passion in her deep tender eyes told him plainly that her feeling for him had not altered, but had deepened with her growth. As she moved away again on the arm of her husband, Onegin felt the sharp pangs of jealousy for the first time in his life, and knew that he now loved this woman with his whole heart; and he was seized with a passionate desire to possess the love he had once refused.

Unable to restrain his overwhelming feelings, he

determined to declare himself at all costs; and, making his way to a retired spot, he waited until Tatiana came by alone: and then, hastening towards her, trembling with emotion, he told her of his love, and implored her to grant him hers in return; but Tatiana reminded him bitterly that he had slighted her proffered affection in former years, treating it as the mere fancy of a sentimental girl, and even blaming her for her boldness.

Cut to the quick by this just retort, Onegin sank to his knees and begged her with increasing emotion to have pity and to grant him the love he now longed for above all things; and his pleading was so powerful that Tatiana, unable to keep up her pretence of coldness any longer, admitted that her passion for him was still the same, and for a few moments a feeling of delirious joy filled her heart at the thought

that her love was at last returned.

But when Onegin next entreated her to leave her home with him, that they might be yet happy together, since theirs was a love that would not be denied, then the young wife declared in broken accents that she would not be untrue to her husband, no matter how hard it might be to refuse the pleading of the man she loved.

Again and again Onegin passionately besought her to obey the dictates of her heart, and to fly with him; but Tatiana, though tempted almost beyond endurance, still brokenly, yet firmly, refused, and at last, fearing to remain longer lest her resolution should break down, she fled away from his presence

with a last distracted look.

Then Onegin, full of despair, and feeling that happiness could never now be his, drew forth a pistol that he had carried with him on his travels; and, since he cared no longer to live, he drew the trigger, and fell lifeless to the ground!

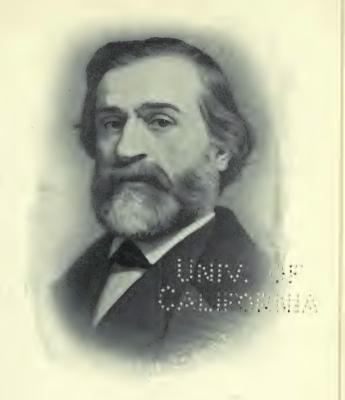
ERNANI

In the wild mountainous districts of Arragon, in the year 1519, a large company of bandits and mountaineer rebels were gathered together one day in their stronghold; for they had been summoned thither at the command of their chief, who, though in reality a noble fallen under the ban of the King of Castile, was known to them only by the name of Ernani.

These lawless folk gave their leader unquestioning obedience and loyal service; for Ernani had won their fierce hearts, not only by his noble and commanding presence, but by his just dealings, his faithful heart, and his unimpeachable honour. Never had the bandits known their chief to break his word, to betray a friend, or to deceive even an enemy; and it was with eager sympathy that they now listened to his appeal for their help.

Ernani told them that he had conceived a passion for a certain beautiful lady of Arragon, whose name was Elvira, and who returned his love, since they had already met on several occasions; but, unhappily for the lovers, Elvira had been betrothed against her will to Don Silva, a Grandee of Spain, who, though advancing in years, was so eager to be united to her that he had already found means to convey her to his castle, where the nuptials were to be celebrated next day. The bandit chief implored the help of his friends to rescue this fair lady from her unhappy position, and to assist him to carry her off from the castle; and the merry rebels gladly agreed to do so.

Having thus made his arrangements with his



VERDI

followers, Ernani betook himself to the castle of Don Silva, where he managed to effect an entrance unobserved; and then concealing himself in an alcove near the apartments of Elvira, he awaited a suitable moment for revealing himself to her.

The captive Elvira was in a most unhappy state of mind; for though her bandit lover had assured her that he would rescue her from her fate, she feared

lest he should come too late.

As the day wore on, Don Silva was called away for a time; and, during his absence, Elvira was surprised and dismayed by an unexpected visit from the young King Carlos of Spain, who, though she knew him to have professed admiration for her, she had hoped would be too much engaged with the conspiracies and difficulties arising upon his recent accession to the throne to find time to press his attentions further.

The young King, however, could not quell his youthful passion so easily; and, knowing that Elvira was at the castle of Don Silva, he had made this surprise visit in order to declare his love for her,

and even to invite her to share his throne.

But Elvira's heart was already given to Ernani, and she begged the King not to press his suit further, since she could not love him; and this reply enraged Carlos, who had heard of her preference for the bandit chief, so that he seized her by the hand, and would have compelled her to follow him, had not her cry for help quickly brought forth Ernani from the alcove.

An angry altercation now took place between the rivals; but as they were about to engage with their swords, Elvira flung herself between the pair and

besought them to desist.

At this moment Don Silva returned, and was filled with grief and indignation at thus finding his betrothed speaking with two lovers in her apartment; and, calling for his weapons, he furiously challenged both the intruders, vowing vengeance for the insult.

The royal attendants, however, now arrived on the scene; and when Don Silva thus discovered that it was his King whom he had challenged and addressed so cavalierly, he was filled with dismay, and knelt for pardon. Carlos, who was at that time eager for the support of his chief nobles, could not well refuse; but, as he departed, he warned Ernani to fly from his wrath, since it was his intention to exterminate the bandit hordes of which he was the chief.

Elvira now begged her lover to escape whilst he could, assuring him that she would remain faithful to their love until he could return and claim her as his own; and since Ernani's honour would not permit him to desert his bandit friends in their hour of peril, he was thus compelled to leave her, though with

many misgivings.

The rebels and bandits, however, met with no success, for the King pursued them with pitiless zeal, and did not rest until he had dispersed the band; and presently a report of Ernani's death was brought to Elvira, who was filled with despair at the news. In spite of her grief, however, she was compelled to listen to the suit of Don Silva once more; and upon the old nobleman now insisting upon her fulfilling her betrothal with him, she was thus forced to consent, being too much dazed and overcome with grief for the loss of her lover to resist.

All arrangements for the celebration of the nuptials were accordingly made; and on the day of the wedding splendid festivities were held at Don Silva's

castle.

But Ernani was not dead, though he had been for some time a fugitive; and having at last made his way back to the neighbourhood of his beloved Elvira, and hearing of revels to be held at the castle, though he knew not the cause, he disguised himself as a poor pilgrim, and asked for admittance and hospitality.

Don Silva, who took a pride in his hospitality to high and low alike, gave the pilgrim welcome, treat-

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ing him as an honoured guest; and inviting him to join in the festivities, he informed him that they were in honour of his own marriage, which was about to be celebrated. At this moment the bridal party entered the hall, accompanied by a gorgeous train of pages, high-born ladies, and Grandees of Spain; and, to his utter woe, Ernani saw that the bride was none other than Elvira herself.

Filled with anger and despair at her seeming unfaithfulness, Ernani flung aside his pilgrim's robe and recklessly revealed himself to the company, demanding to be given up to the King for execution,

since he no longer desired to live.

Don Silva, however, though furious at the intrusion of his hated rival, refused to give him up to justice, declaring that it was a particular point in his code of honour to regard the person of one whom he had received as his guest as sacred from harm or betrayal. With these proud words the old noble retired with his followers to give directions for the extra guarding of his castle, fearing lest a party of fugitive bandits might be lurking near their leader.

Ernani and Elviri were thus left alone for a few moments; and as her angry lover began to pour forth reproachful words upon her, the unhappy lady related to him how he had been reported to her as dead, and how she had been compelled to accept Don Silva's suit, declaring, however, that it had been her intention to destroy herself afterwards. Finding, therefore, that Elvira's heart was still faithful to him, Ernani clasped her in his arms once more; and the wretched pair bemoaned their sad fate together, knowing that they were in great peril.

At this moment Don Silva returned to the hall; and thus seeing that Elvira still loved the proscribed bandit, his jealousy was roused again, and he vowed vengeance upon Ernani. When, however, the proud bandit declared once more that he was willing to die, Don Silva still refused to give him up, hoping for a

more subtle and terrible revenge.

The attendants now announced that the King and a company of soldiers were clamouring at the gates for admission; and when Ernani had been hastily concealed in a secret chamber, and Elvira had retired to her own apartment, Don Carlos was admitted. The young King announced that he had scattered the bandit hordes, and now sought their chief; and adding that he had tracked Ernani to Castle Silva, he sternly demanded that he should be delivered up to him.

This command Don Silva stubbornly refused to carry out; whereupon the King gave orders for the castle to be searched. The soldiers, however, being unacquainted with the secret chamber, were unable to find the bandit; and then Carlos, furious at being defied, declared that if Ernani's head were not forthcoming he would take Don Silva's.

Whilst the nobleman was still protesting against betraying one who had been his guest, hoping thus to reserve Ernani for a more cruel fate, Elvira hastily entered the hall, and, falling on her knees before the King, she besought him not to engage in strife,

but to have mercy on his foes..

On beholding the beautiful Elvira again the King's suppressed love for her burned fiercely once more; and, taking her gently by the hand, he declared that he would now hold her as a hostage for the good faith of Don Silva, until Ernani should be delivered up to him. It was in vain that Don Silva protested against such a proceeding; and the weeping Elvira was at once taken away by the King to his palace.

When Ernani was at length led forth from his hiding-place, and learned that his beloved one was held as a hostage by the King, he was furious; and now regarding Don Silva as a companion in misfortune, he offered to join him in a scheme of vengeance against Carlos, who was their mutual enemy and rival in the affections of Elvira. Regarding his life, however, as forfeited to Silva, to whom he was grateful for having protected him so long, Ernani declared his

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willingness to die whenever his rival should desire it; and as a pledge of his solemn promise, he gave the nobleman his hunting-horn, saying, "By this token, in the hour when thou wilt have Ernani perish, sound this horn, and I shall know it is the hour for me to die!"

Don Silva, thus recognising that he had Ernani in his power, gladly accepted him as a colleague in taking vengeance on the King; and the pair immediately sought out a band of conspirators who were at that time seeking to assassinate Carlos, who had not yet been unanimously accepted as King, and offered to join them in their enterprise. They were eagerly welcomed by the conspirators; and it was arranged that they should meet on a certain day in the Catacombs of Aquisgrano, and, by drawing lots, decide who should strike the fatal blow.

Meanwhile, Carlos had received information that a conspiracy had been formed against him; and as he was now almost certain of being accepted as King by the majority of the people, he bravely determined to face his secret foes and denounce them. He therefore bade his esquire to cause three salutes of cannon to be sounded should he be accepted as King at the final meeting of Electors to be held that day, that he might be sure of his regal power before denouncing his foes; and he also gave orders for the Ministers of State, together with the Lady Elvira, to be brought to him in the conspirators' meeting-place.

He then made his way alone to the Catacombs of Aquisgrano, and took up a position beside the mausoleum of his illustrious father, Charles the Great; and here many solemn and noble thoughts passed through the mind of the young prince. The sacred responsibility of his high position impressed itself upon him for the first time, so that a sense of his own frailty and weakness made him humbly conscious of his utter dependence upon a Higher Power than his own; and he solemnly registered a vow that

if his kingship should be accepted that day, he would forego the careless pleasures and passions of youth, and devote himself loyally to the service of his country and people, and thereby win for himself a glorious name and virtue's "crown of deathless fame."

Having made this sacred resolve, the young King now concealed himself in the royal mausoleum, from whence he could see and hear all that passed without being observed; and a few minutes later the conspirators entered, all wrapped in long dark cloaks. Don Silva and Ernani had established themselves as the leaders; and after reciting their hatred of the monarchy, they drew lots for the privilege of killing the young Carlos.

The name drawn was that of Ernani; and Don Silva, greatly disappointed, entreated the bandit to resign the right in his favour. Ernani, however, refused to forego his privilege; and in spite of Silva's angry warning that his vengeance should quickly follow, he firmly declared that he alone should

kill his royal rival.

Just as the lot had been thus decided, the conspirators were startled by the sound of a cannon shot repeated three times from the fortress of the city; and this being the signal for Don Carlos, he stepped forth from the mausoleum with a stern and regal air. At the same moment there entered from another door six Electors and the Ministers of State, followed by royal pages who bore the crown and regalia; and after these came a retinue of splendidly dressed lords and ladies, amongst whom was the pale and drooping Elvira.

At the bidding of the Electors the crown was placed upon the head of the young King, and he was solemnly hailed as the Sovereign; and Carlos, with equally dignified solemnity, accepted the charge laid upon him. Then, turning to the discomfited conspirators, he exposed their plot; and, denouncing them as traitors, he condemned the nobles to the

block and the plebeians to prison. Ernani was herded with the latter; but refusing to bear such an insult, he now disclosed his true identity as a Duke of ancient family, and haughtily claimed the death of an aristocrat.

Carlos readily granted this plea; but Elvira, in despair at thus losing her lover for ever, fell on her knees, and passionately implored the King to pardon Ernani, adding as her plea, "Virtue sublime is mercy

in kings!"

As Carlos listened to the pleading voice of the beautiful Elvira, he was reminded of the sacred vow he had so recently made; and, desiring to win the affection of his people by ruling them with love and clemency, he now magnanimously proclaimed a gracious pardon for all the conspirators. Further than this, he steadfastly quelled the longings of his youthful heart, and resigned all further thoughts of Elvira; and knowing that her love was given to Ernani, he declared it to be his royal will that the pair should be united.

So the faithful lovers were wedded at last: and Ernani and his fair bride retired to the ex-bandit's ducal palace, where a noble company had assembled to bid them welcome and join in the bridal fes-But amongst the merry company of wedding guests there glided a masked stranger, who greeted no one, and held himself aloof from all; and this was none other than Don Silva, who, less noble than his King, was consumed with fierce jealousy at the happiness of his favoured rival, and had now come

to indulge in a cruel vengeance.

When the guests had departed, and Ernani and his bride were alone, they embraced each other with great joy, thankful that their troubles were over, and wondering at the unexpected happiness which lay before them; but suddenly they were startled by the loud lingering blast of a hunting-horn.

Ernani became pale as death, and his heart stiffened with horror; for he remembered his vow to Don Silva, and knew that this was the signal for him to die. Elvira was filled with alarm at his altered looks; but Ernani declared that he was unwell, and bade her fetch him a cordial, that in her absence he might brace himself for his fearful act. Full of grief that his cup of happiness should be thus snatched from him as he was about to enjoy it, he thought wildly for a moment of escape; but just as he was about to follow Elvira, Don Silva himself entered the room, and calmly bade him fulfil the solemn promise he had made, adding, with fiendish triumph, that one so nobly born and of such high character could not stoop to forswear himself.

Well did Ernani know this; for never yet had he broken his word to any living soul, nor could his high sense of honour permit him to do so now. Just as he drew his dagger, however, Elvira returned to the room; and now hearing of the fearful compact which had been made between the two rivals for her hand, she knelt before Don Silva and besought him, with distracted sobs, to release her beloved husband

from his yow.

But Don Silva had steeled his heart to withstand this piteous appeal, and coldly announced that he awaited the fulfilment of his rival's vow; and Ernani, knowing well that he could expect no mercy from such a remorseless foe, and too proud to tarnish his honourable name by forswearing himself, clasped the weeping Elvira in a last embrace. Then quickly grasping his dagger he resolutely stabbed himself to the heart, faithful to the fatal promise he had made; and as Elvira, with a terrible cry of woe, fell senseless beside him, he expired and Don Silva's vengeance was accomplished.

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RIGOLETTO

During the sixteenth century there reigned over the fair city of Mantua a handsome young Duke, whose brilliant Court was one of the gayest and most licentious of its age. For the youthful ruler cared little for the responsibilities of State, and instead of seeking the welfare of his people, he chose to gather around him a band of careless nobles of his own age, and to pass his time amidst the excitements of wild excesses and love-intrigues. Susceptible, ardent, and inconstant, his amours were frequent, passionate, and short, and there was scarcely a lady at his Court—not to mention various pretty maidens of more humble birth—with whom he had not, at some time or other, fancied himself in love.

In all his intrigues the Duke was constantly aided by his Jester, Rigoletto, a hunchback, who was the most privileged person at Court; for, beneath the cap and bells, the buffoon possessed a fertile, scheming brain that never failed to devise cunning ruses to gratify the lawless passions of his unscrupulous master.

For this reason Rigoletto had gained many enemies, for, besides exciting the jealousy of the courtiers by making himself the favourite of their royal master, he was also hated by many haughty nobles whose honour had been assailed by his intrigues. The jealous lords constantly vented their spleen upon the hated Jester by scornful taunts and slights, all of which Rigoletto returned with interest, making the proud courtiers the subjects of his spiteful wit and

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stinging raillery, whilst inwardly he triumphed in

a joy they knew naught about.

For Rigoletto had a beautiful daughter, named Gilda, whom he loved passionately, and fearing lest the maiden's loveliness should lead to the ruin of her innocence, he had ever kept her existence a secret even from his most intimate acquaintances.

To this end, on coming to Mantua, he placed her in a humble house in a quiet part of the city, under the care of her old nurse, Giovanna; and every evening after dark he went to receive the sweet caresses of this darling child, a stolen happiness that more than compensated him for the scorn of his enemies.

Little did the poor Jester guess that the precious treasure he guarded so lovingly was doomed to become the prey of the very person whose notice of her he most dreaded—his royal master; yet so it was

ordained.

For every morning Gilda attended matins in the neighbouring church, and here she was at length seen by the young Duke, who quickly became enamoured of her beauty. Every day he stole into the church to watch her at her devotions; and Gilda. though she scarcely dared return the ardent glances bestowed upon her by the handsome cavalier, soon felt an answering thrill in her own heart. Yet, fearing her father's anger, she kept this new sweet joy a secret: and since the Duke did not need his favourite's help in such a simple enterprise, it came about that Rigoletto remained in ignorance that his happiness was at stake. But in spite of the care he took, his secret visits to the humble house at length became known to the jealous courtiers; and this discovery was made soon after the Duke had first seen Gilda at the church.

One evening, a splendid entertainment was being held at the Ducal Palace, and in an ante-room a group of courtiers, freshly smarting under the spiteful wit of Rigoletto, were gathered together venting their grievances, and listening to the special complaints of one of their number, Count Ceprano, whose pretty wife was for that evening the Duke's plaything, thanks to the machinations of the hated Jester.

Whilst they were talking angrily together, they were joined by another noble, named Marullo, who declared that he had great news for them; and in answer to their eager questions, he told them he had discovered that Rigoletto had a sweetheart, since he went nearly every evening after dark to pay a visit at a humble house in a certain quiet street—a sure sign that his mistress dwelt there.

The courtiers all laughed derisively at the idea of the ugly hunchback being in love; but Ceprano, seeing in the incident a means of revenging himself upon the scheming Jester, quickly proposed a plan to them. He suggested that they should repair to the humble dwelling pointed out by Marullo, and, forcing an entrance, carry off the fair lady who dwelt therein; and by this means they would punish the

hunchback for the insults he had piled upon them.

The courtiers eagerly fell in with the plan, and having promised to meet Ceprano late next evening in order to carry out the enterprise, they returned to the brilliant salon. Here, dancing, feasting, and merriment were being indulged in with an utter absence of restraint, for it was the delight of the Duke of Mantua to pursue his pleasures with an ex-

travagant recklessness.

But suddenly the revels were strangely interrupted, for after a loud altercation with the servitors at the door, who vainly tried to detain him, an uninvited guest dashed through the careless throng in the calon, and quickly made his way to the spot where the Duke was standing. The intruder was an aged noble, the Count of Monterone, whose beautiful daughter had lately been stolen from her home to gratify the evil passion of the libertine Duke; and in a voice trembling with scorn and anger, the outraged father demanded the restoration of his child, calling down vengeance upon her betrayer.

But Monterone's appeals and threats were drowned in derisive laughter, and the Duke, impatient at such an unpleasant interruption to the revels, instantly ordered his guards to imprison the Count in a cell beneath.

Rigoletto, taking up his cue from his master's humour, made merry over the poor father's despair, and uttered mocking quips at his expense; but soon he regretted his words, for as Monterone was being led away by the guards, he turned upon the Jester and cursed him with great fury.

Now, Rigoletto was very superstitious, and so was filled with fear as he realised that a father's curse had fallen upon him, and though the revels went on as before, the incident took such a hold on his imagination that he felt some terrible woe was in store for

him.

Late next night, these disturbing thoughts were still in the Jester's mind as he hastened towards the humble abode of his beloved daughter; and when he was presently accosted by a begging bravo, he stopped to converse with him, thinking that he might have occasion later on for the services of some such desperate rogue.

The bravo, who gave his name as Sparafucile, declared that for gold he would dispose of any enemy who lay in the Jester's path, stating that his abode was an outlying, lonely inn, where intended victims were easily lured by the attractive looks of his pretty

sister, a gipsy-girl named Maddalena.

Having agreed to seek the bravo's aid, should he need it, Rigoletto hurried into the courtyard of his house; and here he found the beautiful Gilda already waiting for him with her attendant. Giovanna.

Now, Gilda had been kept in complete ignorance of her father's name and profession; and to-night, after greeting him with her usual joyful embraces, she begged of him to reveal his true identity, being weary of the mystery that so constantly surrounded her.

But Rigoletto firmly refused her plea, gently

bidding her to love him only and ask no questions; and then he turned to Giovanna, sternly demanding whether she guarded her charge with the strictness he had commanded. Gilda trembled at this question, remembering the gallant whom she met each day at church, and whose admiring glances had aroused love in her heart; but Giovanna, less fearful, boldly answered her master's question, and assured him that he had no cause for alarm.

Then Rigoletto bade his daughter a loving farewell, and departed; for he never dared to remain long with her, for fear his absence from Court should be

noticed.

No sooner had he gone than the young Duke of Mantua suddenly appeared in the courtyard, having at last discovered the abode of his new love, and determined to seek an interview with her that night; and rushing forward, he clasped Gilda in his arms, declaring that he loved her. Giovanna, having secretly received a purse of gold from the Duke upon his entrance, quietly departed into the house, and the

pair were thus left alone in the courtyard.

Gilda was at first alarmed at finding herself alone with the stranger, whom she quickly recognised as the handsome cavalier whose ardent glances had thrilled her at her morning devotions; but, utterly unable to resist the passionate wooing of the Duke, she at length submitted willingly to his caresses, and admitted that she loved him in return. The cunning gallant described himself as a poor scholar, who would nevertheless make a humble home for her; and Gilda was filled with rapture at the thought that no barrier of rank would thus separate her from her lover.

Presently, approaching footsteps in the street beyond warded them that this sweet interview must end; and the Duke, fearful of discovery, bade the maiden a hasty, but passionate farewell, and quickly hurried away. Then Gilda, gazing lovingly after his retreating figure, reluctantly entered the house; but not before she had been seen by the newcomers, who were none other than Count Ceprano, Marullo, and their companion plotters, who, masked and cloaked, had come to carry out the plan of vengeance on Rigoletto which they had arranged the night before.

They were astonished at the beauty of the Jester's supposed mistress, but ere they had time for further comment on the matter, they were suddenly confronted by Rigoletto himself, who, being uneasy in his mind, had returned to take another look at his

daughter's sanctuary.

Marullo, quickly seeing additional zest for their scheme in this unlooked-for interruption, gaily accosted the Jester, and making himself known, invited him to join in their enterprise; and to deceive the poor hunchback further he declared that they were about to carry off the wife of Count Ceprano, and take her to the Duke.

Rigoletto, thus imagining that his own secret treasure was not sought, quickly fell into the trap, for Ceprano's palace was situated on the opposite side of the street, a circumstance which gave credence to the story; and delighted to assist in bringing dishonour upon one of his most hated enemies, he readily agreed

to join the ravishers.

Marullo then declared that since the others were all masked, Rigoletto must also have his face hidden; and seizing a scarf, he bound it so tightly over the Jester's eyes and ears, that he could neither see nor hear. He next made his victim hold the ladder they had brought against the wall of his own house, and then he and his companions, hardly able to restrain their mirth at the trick they were playing, climbed up to an open window above, and made their entry.

Rigoletto, holding the ladder below, still imagined that it was his enemy's house that was being entered; and when the ravishers presently returned, bearing Gilda in their arms, he rejoiced, thinking that the victim was Ceprano's wife. His hearing being dulled by the tight bandages over his ears, he did not catch

the stifled cries of the poor girl as she was quickly borne away; and it was not until the maskers were far out of his reach that he discovered he had been left alone.

Then, tearing off his bandage with difficulty, he saw that the ladder was leaning against the wall of his own house; and realising the cruel trick that had been played upon him, he was filled with rage and despair. He rushed madly down the street towards the palace, trembling for the fate of his beloved child; and forcing his way to the ante-room adjoining the Duke's private chamber, he found his enemies already there. For the plotters had immediately brought their prize in triumph to their royal master, declaring her to be the mistress of Rigoletto; and the Duke had received her with joy, on recognising the lovely features of his own new lady-love.

When Rigoletto reached the ante-room, he passionately demanded to have his precious daughter restored to him, being filled with woe on learning that she was even now in the power of the Duke; but the courtiers, though astonished to know that she was his child, only met him with derisive laughter, utterly

disregarding his frantic appeals for mercy.

But at that moment, Gilda herself rushed forth from the Duke's room, and flung herself in her father's arms, having heard his voice in the anteroom; and as the Jester quickly hurried her away, she poured forth into his ears the whole story of her infatuation for the handsome cavalier who had admired her in church, of his visit to her that evening, and of her despair on now discovering him to be but a base libertine, who only desired to use her as his plaything.

Yet, even in spite of this knowledge, the poor girl loved him still; and when Rigoletto swore vengeance on the false betrayer, she entreated him to spare her lover, whom she had already forgiven for the wrong

he had done her.

But Rigoletto's anger against his royal master was

so furious that nothing but death would satisfy his longing for revenge; and quickly sending for Sparafucile, the bravo, he bargained with him for a sum of gold to entice the Duke to his lonely inn and murder him there. A few days later Sparafucile returned, saying that his sister, Maddalena, had already brought herself before the Duke's notice, and enticed him into a promise to visit the inn that evening, when his murder would be easily accomplished during the night; and Rigoletto determined to take Gilda to the spot also, that he might convince her of her base lover's faithlessness, and so cure her infatuation for him.

So when dusk fell, the Jester and his daughter quickly made their way to a wild spot on the outskirts of the city; and on arriving at the bravo's lonely inn, Rigoletto drew the maiden into the shadows near a window, from whence they could see and hear all that took place in the room

beyond.

A few minutes later, they saw the Duke, in disguise, enter the inn; and as Sparafucile left the room, after serving the guest with wine, his pretty gipsysister, Maddalena, took his place. The Duke at once began to make love to the girl, who, however, only laughed and teased him in return; and when Gilda thus saw for herself how soon her fickle gallant had forgotten her, and heard him utter the same sweet love-speeches to the gipsy-girl that he had whispered into her own delighted ears only a few evenings ago, she was filled with deepest grief.

Rigoletto, seeing that his daughter was at last convinced of her lover's faithlessness, was now eager to get her away from the inn, not wishing her to know of the tragic end in store for the false betrayer; and bidding her hasten home at once, he told her to disguise herself in the garments of a youth, which he had provided for her, and to then fly on horseback to Verona, where he would meet her later on. At first, Gilda could not bring herself to leave the

spot; but when her father sternly repeated his command, she hurried away at once to obey his will.

Sparafucile now came out to learn his final instructions, and Rigoletto told him that after murdering the Duke, he was to place the dead body in a sack, that it might be ready for him to throw into the river Mincio that flowed close by. He then gave the bravo half of the money agreed upon between them, and promising to return at midnight with the remainder of the money, when he should expect to find the deed

accomplished, he departed.

Throughout the evening, the unsuspecting Duke amused himself with the pretty decoy, Maddalena; and the gipsy-girl at length became so fascinated with him that she could no longer bear to think of taking his life, and a feeling of pity for his fate took sudden hold of her heart. She was therefore filled with repulsion when her brother next appeared and invited the guest to retire to rest in the upper chamber set apart for him; and when, after a last tender glance at her, the Duke had mounted the rickety stairs and stretched himself on the couch above, she besought Sparafucile to spare the young man's life, declaring she felt a tender interest in him.

But Sparafucile muttered angrily that the hunch-back's gold was more to him than the gay cavalier's life; and it was not until Maddalena again passion-ately implored him with tears in her eyes to grant her request, that he at length agreed on a compromise. He promised to spare the cavalier only on condition that some other stranger called at the inn before midnight, whom he could slay instead, and pass off to the hunchback as his victim; and with this, Maddalena was forced to be content, though she felt little hope of gaining her wish, since it was a stormy night, and no strangers were likely to call.

Now, the whole of this conversation between the brother and sister had been overheard by Gilda; for, though she had been to her home and changed her garments for male attire, according to Rigoletto's orders, she had been unable to resist the temptation to return to the inn that she might look once again upon the features of the man she still loved so dearly.

She arrived just in time to hear the gipsy-girl pleading for the life of the Duke; and realising that he was about to be murdered, she was overcome with horror. But on hearing the condition by which he might yet be saved, a wild enthusiasm filled her heart; and she resolved heroically that since her own life was ruined by a hopeless passion, she would sacrifice

herself for the sake of her faithless lover.

Having commended her soul to Heaven, she calmly approached the door and knocked; and instantly there was a dead silence within. Maddalena trembled on hearing the sound; but Sparafucile drew his dagger, and upon a second knock being heard, he flung open the door and fiercely stabbed the supposed youth standing there. Gilda fell to the ground without a single word; and hastily producing a sack, the brother and sister fastened the body within it.

It was now midnight; and a few minutes later, Rigoletto entered, and paying down the remainder of the money promised, demanded his victim. Sparafucile produced the sack, and not wishing his trick to be discovered, suggested that the body should be immediately thrown into the river, and offered his

assistance for this purpose.

Rigoletto, however, declined the offer, desiring to gloat over his victim alone; and when the bravo had reluctantly relinquished the sack, he dragged it a few yards distant, and then sat down to rejoice over his fallen enemy. But at that moment he heard the sound of a voice singing in the upper chamber of the inn; for the Duke had been awakened by the talking below, and was now indulging in gay snatches of song.

Instantly recognising the voice as that of the Duke, Rigoletto was filled with amazement and angry disappointment; and furious at having been thus cheated of his prey, he tore open the sack, and by the light

of the moon beheld the beloved features of his own

beautiful daughter!

Horror-struck, the poor hunchback lifted his child in his arms, and wildly implored her to speak to him once again; and Gilda, who was still breathing, opened her eyes and murmured a few words, saying that she had willingly given her life to save that of her lover.

She then sank back, dead, in her father's arms; and Rigoletto, suddenly remembering the curse that had been laid upon him for having mocked at a distracted parent's grief, realised that his retribution was just, and, with a despairing cry of woe, fell senseless beside the prostrate body of his beloved child.

IL TROVATORE, OR, THE GIPSY'S VENGEANCE

(The Troubadour)

During the Middle Ages there lived, in the kingdom of Arragon—one of the powerful divisions of Spain—a proud nobleman, known as the Count de Luna, whose two young sons were the joy and pride of his heart.

The Count loved his children so dearly that he could not bear to think of ill befalling them; and so, when he was told one day that the youngest child, who was still but a babe, had suddenly fallen sick, he was much alarmed, although the ailment was only

a trifling one.

Thus it happened that when darkness fell the devoted nurse of this high-born babe was bidden to keep watch over her charge throughout the night; and when the anxious Count and his household had retired to rest, the faithful attendant began her vigil. Gently she soothed the sick child until he fell asleep; and then, through the long hours of darkness that followed, she kept a patient watch in the silent chamber.

The babe slept peacefully all through the night, and at last the grey dawn appeared. Then, quite suddenly, the nurse heard a sound as of someone moving in the room, and knew that she was no longer alone; and quickly springing to her feet, she beheld a strange and alarming sight.

Standing close beside the sleeping child was an old

Zingara, or Spanish gipsy-woman, clad in curious fantastic robes, gazing with fierce, dark eyes upon the little one, who was now moving restlessly in his sleep. With her skinny arms upraised as though uttering an incantation, and her piercing eyes fixed upon the slumbering child, the old Zingara looked such a malevolent figure that the startled attendant shrieked aloud with terror; and her cries very soon aroused the whole household.

Quickly the servants seized the old hag, and dragged her from the room; and in spite of her explanations that she had but come to read the fortune of the sleeping child, they roughly thrust her from the castle, saying that she was a witch, and meant mischief.

Their fears were confirmed next day, when the sick babe was found to be somewhat worse; and then, according to the superstitions of those times, the Count, full of grief and rage, declared that his child had been bewitched and spell-bound by the intruder of the night before. All his friends and servitors were of the same mind, and after searching in the neighbouring country-side, they at length found and seized the old Zingara, and hurried her off to be burnt as a witch.

In vain the poor creature begged for mercy, and protested her innocence: with kicks and cuffs she was dragged roughly along, and bound to the stake that had already been set up for her. Quickly the faggots were piled around, and set alight; and as the cruel flames leaped up, and the victim's shrieks rose to the skies her tormentors answered with mocking taunts and howls of rage.

Amongst those in the crowd gathered round the pile was the Zingara's own daughter, a beautiful young gipsy named Azucena, who had followed in the crush with her babe in her arms, trying vainly to get a last word with her doomed mother. But the clamouring crowd, mad with eagerness to see the witch burn, roughly pressed her back; and when the

poor girl at length came upon the dreadful scene, the flames were already raging fiercely around the stake, and the wretched victim was almost dead.

The old Zingara, however, cast a dying glance upon her grief-stricken child, and with her last breath cried out: "Avenge me, my daughter!

Avenge me!"

Full of rage and despair, Azucena rushed away from the terrible scene, and, determined to take a speedy revenge, she entered the Count's deserted castle, and snatching up the sick child—who was already recovering—she ran back with him to the place of execution, intending to burn him in the same fire that had consumed her mother.

The mad crowd had departed by this time; and stirring up the dying embers into a blaze once more, the young gipsy was just about to fling a second victim into their midst, when the Count's child uttered a plaintive cry.

The child's wailing softened the heart of Azucena for a moment, and putting him down on the grass beside her own babe, she sank to the ground in a

semi-conscious state.

Suddenly, however, a vision of her poor mother writhing in the flames and calling out for vengeance arose before her troubled imagination, and starting up in a delirium of rage, she seized the wailing infant, and flung him into the midst of the flames, with a triumphant cry.

But her triumph was quickly changed to horror, for, on turning to pick up her own sweet babe, she found that the Count's son was still alive! In that moment of blind frenzy, she had snatched up her own child in mistake, and cast him into the devour-

ing flames.

Stunned by this terrible blow, Azucena was now filled with remorse and woe, and tenderly lifting the helpless babe who had been the innocent cause of two such dreadful deeds, she bore him away to the mountains of Biscaglia, to be brought up as her own son

in the gipsy tribe to which she belonged. But, though Azucena soon grew to love her adopted son with all her heart, she could not forget the past, and she still nursed a deep desire for vengeance against the murderers of her mother.

When, after the burning of the supposed witch, it was discovered that the Count's sick child had been stolen, a great outcry of grief arose; and as the young Zingara, Azucena (who had been observed to rush away during the burning of her mother), had now disappeared from the neighbourhood, it was plain to all that she had taken the missing babe with her, out of revenge. The Count, in despair, sent out search-parties in every direction; but all their efforts were in vain, for no traces could be found of the lost child.

Now it happened that during the evening after the old Zingara's terrible death one of the Count's followers, Ferrando, came past the place of execution, and noticed upon the heap of ashes the charred bones of a little child amongst those of the gipsy-woman; and he at once came to the conclusion that Azucena, in revenge, had stolen away his lord's babe in order to burn him upon the same pile with her mother. He was filled with horror as the certainty of this grew upon him, but he decided to say nothing about it to the Count, thinking it more merciful to let the distracted father imagine that his stolen child was still living. However, he stored up in his memory the picture of the young Zingara's features, that he might know her again; and he determined that if ever he should discover her whereabouts, she should also suffer death by burning for her dreadful deed.

But, in spite of Ferrando's caution, the Count de Luna never recovered from the loss of his little one, but died of grief a short time after; and as he lay dying, he besought his elder son to still continue the search for the stolen child. The young Count remembered his father's wish, and as he grew up to manhood, he never ceased to make inquiries for his

missing brother in every place he visited.

Meanwhile the stolen child was living the free and happy life of a gipsy in the mountains of Biscaglia. He was given the name of Manrico; and as he was led from the very first to look upon Azucena as his mother, he had no idea of his true and exalted birth.

He loved his supposed mother with great devotion, and as the years went on, and he grew up into a handsome and noble youth, Azucena felt as proud of her adopted son as though he had indeed been her

own.

Manrico, being both brave and daring in disposition, very early had the craving for adventure, and as soon as he had learned how to wield a sword with skill, he left the gipsy band and went off to the wars to seek glory and renown. Success smiled on him from the first, and the brave youth, after distinguishing himself in several campaigns, was spoken of with

honour and respect wherever he went.

After many wanderings, Manrico at length found himself with the army he had joined—whose cause he felt to be a just one—engaged in settling a dispute with the powerful kingdom of Arragon; and learning that a grand Tournament was to be held in this very country, he determined to enter the lists himself. So, having donned a suit of black armour, with an unblazoned shield, he rode off to the Tournament, where he soon covered himself with glory; for his valour and skill was so great that he carried all before him, and none could overcome him in single combat.

When the Tournament came to an end, Manrico was consequently awarded the victor's wreath of laurel; and the brave youth knelt to be crowned by the fair hands of the lovely Lady Leonora, who had

been chosen to give away the prizes.

Now, this Lady Leonora was the most beautiful of all the fair and noble ladies in attendance upon the Queen of Arragon; and as Manrico gazed upwards into her tender dark eyes, a thrill of love and admiration ran through his whole being, and he felt that

she would reign in his heart for ever.

When he returned to his camp, he thought of her constantly, and at last the longing to see, or at least be near to her once again, became so strong within him, that (although he well knew, being of but humble gipsy-birth, as he supposed, he could not aspire to the hand of a high-born lady) he determined to let her know of his love and devotion.

So, every evening, clad in the garb of a Troubadour, he made his way to the palace of Aliaferia, where the Queen of Arragon held Court; and there, beneath the window of his lady-love, he sang a sweet, passionate serenade, to the accompaniment of a

soft-toned harp.

Nor was Leonora insensible to these tender strains that nightly swelled beneath her window; for she, too, had constantly thought upon Manrico, whose valour and noble appearance had won her heart at the Tournament.

When she heard the sweet notes of the bold serenader for the first time, she remembered his voice, and a thrill of joy went through her as, flying to the open lattice, she recognised in the Troubadour below the form of her brave hero. Manrico was filled with rapture when he found that Leonora did not despise his love; and after this the lovers frequently met for a few blissful moments in the palace gardens after darkness had fallen, caring naught for the risk they ran.

But Leonora had another suitor, who quickly grew madly jealous of the mysterious Troubadour who was known to haunt the palace grounds, though

none had yet beheld him.

This was none other than the young Count de Luna, who, upon attaining to manhood, had risen high in favour at the Court of Arragon; and having fallen in love with the beautiful Leonora, he had early offered himself as a suitor. And even when the fair lady-in-waiting, having no thoughts for any other than her beloved Troubadour, refused to smile upon him, the Count still continued to press his suit; and full of haughty anger against his unknown rival, he also went to walk in the palace gardens at night, in the hope of encountering the favoured Troubadour, whom he little dreamed was his own long-lost brother.

So it happened one night, as he stood beneath Leonora's window, he heard the soft strains of a harp, and following the sounds, presently beheld the noble form of the young Troubadour standing in a secluded dell, with the moonlight shining upon him. At the same moment, Leonora herself appeared, and, addressing her lover in tender tones, declared that she loved him with her whole heart.

Full of jealous rage, the Count de Luna sprang between the lovers, and haughtily called upon the Troubadour to declare his name; and on hearing that his hated rival was none other than the renowned Manrico, the enemy of his country, he at once

challenged him to mortal combat.

In fear for her lover's life, Leonora begged them not to fight; but, rivals in love and war, the pair were not to be put asunder, and rushing off to a more distant spot, they began a passionate duel. Although, as the swords clashed together, the proud Count boastfully taunted his youthful rival with lack of courage and skill, he soon discovered that he had met his match; for in a few minutes Manrico had disarmed his enemy, and held him at his sword's point. Some strange inward power, and a sudden feeling of mercy, restrained him, however, from striking the fatal blow, and, sheathing his sword, he allowed the dazed Count to rise and depart.

Soon after this event, the war was continued, and in a great battle, the army in which Manrico served was defeated. Even when he saw that all was lost, the brave Manrico still tried to rally his forces; but at length, in a desperate struggle against a mighty charge of the enemy, led by the Count de Luna, he

fell, badly wounded, and was left upon the field for dead.

But it happened that Azucena, the gipsy, was camping in the neighbourhood, with some members of her tribe; and hearing that her brave Manrico had been slain in the battle, she went to look for his body amongst the dead. After a long and weary search she at length found the poor youth, covered with wounds, but, to her joy, still alive; and after binding up his hurts, she had him carried away to his old home in

the mountains of Biscaglia.

Here, with great tenderness, she nursed him back to health and strength once more; and since Manrico had been absent at the wars a long time, the reunion was very sweet to her, for she had grown to love him as her own son. Yet when Manrico told her of his two meetings with the Count de Luna, all her old desire to avenge her mother came back with renewed force, and she implored him to slay the young Count the next time he had him in his power. She then told him the story of how her mother had been so cruelly burned as a witch, and of the dreadful mistake she herself had made when seeking vengeance; but as she did not inform Manrico that he was that same stolen child, he still regarded himself as her son.

Whilst they were talking of these things one day, a courier arrived from the wars with a message for the young soldier, announcing that his arms had again met with success, and that the prince in command now desired Manrico to take over the defence of the fortress of Castellor, which was about to be stormed by the enemy. The message had been written by a friend of Manrico's, an officer named Ruiz, and at the end he stated that the Lady Leonora, hearing that her Troubadour lover had been killed in battle, was now about to enter a convent near the fortress.

Full of despair at the thought that Leonora might even now be lost to him for ever, Manrico ordered his fleetest horse to be saddled at once; and, beedless of the pleading of Azucena, who feared for his scarcely-healed wounds, he rode off in hot haste for Castellor, praying that he might yet arrive in time to prevent his beloved one from taking the vows of a num.

Now, the Count de Luna had also been told that Leonora meant to enter a convent; and as his desire to possess her was still as strong as ever, he laid a cunning plan for carrying her off, even from the

threshold of the altar itself.

On the evening upon which Leonora was to take the vows, he secured a small body of soldiers to help him, and hid amidst the bushes beside the little chapel that adjoined the convent; and just as the procession of nuns approached, with the beautiful maiden in their midst, he rushed forth to stop their passage.

Leonora trembled at the sudden appearance of the Count, whom she had always disliked and feared; and when he declared passionately that he meant to carry her off by force to be his bride, she shrieked, and

repulsed him indignantly.

At this critical moment, Manrico suddenly rode up, and, springing from his horse, rushed between the pair, who stared at him with utter astonishment. But surprise was quickly changed to joy and relief on the part of Leonora, who clung to her restored lover with trusting arms; and when the Count realised that the hated rival, whom he had left for dead upon the field of battle, was still alive, he was filled with disappointment and jealous despair.

Wildly, he ordered his men to attack the newcomer; but at the same time, a large troop of the enemy's soldiers, led by the officer, Ruiz, rode up to the help of Manrico. Seeing that further resistance was useless, the Count was compelled to retire; and since Leonora had no longer any desire to take convent vows, now that her lover was restored to her, Manrico joyfully led her away to the fortress of Castellor

which he had been bidden to defend.

Here, for a short time, the lovers were very happy;

and, hand locked in hand, they walked daily upon the battlements of the castle, talking of the sweet time to come when they would be free to live together in

peace and joy.

But heart-rending grief was yet in store for them; for the Count de Luna, as leader of the storming party, was determined that the attack on the castle should meet with success, and that Manrico should be utterly defeated. With this object, he sent for additional men, and arranged all his plans with great care; and as he stood within the encampment just before the attack, he knew that Castellor was doomed. Yet he felt little satisfaction in this thought, for he could not get away from the taunting fact that even when he had parted the lovers for ever, Leonora would never care for him, since her whole heart was given to Manrico.

These galling thoughts were quickly interrupted by the sounds of a disturbance in the camp; and a few moments later, the Count's old follower, Ferrando, entered the tent, saying that a gipsy-woman had been found hovering in the neighbourhood, and seized as a spy. A number of soldiers immediately afterwards entered, dragging with them the Zingara, Azucena, who had followed her adopted son to Castellor in the hope of being able to serve him, but had now fallen

into the hands of his enemies.

On questioning the gipsy and learning that she came from the mountains of Biscaglia, the Count at once demanded whether she remembered how the young child of the Count de Luna had been stolen away and carried thither; and when the Zingara replied that she had heard the story, he eagerly asked if she had any tidings of the lost one, who was his own brother.

On hearing this, Azucena trembled with excitement, knowing now that she was in the presence of the man upon whom she wished to revenge herself for the death of her mother; and at the same moment, Ferrando, who had been gazing at her intently, suddenly remembered her features, and declared to the

Count that this was the very same gipsy-woman who had stolen his brother years ago and burned him upon the witch's pyre, relating, for the first time, how he had seen the child's bones amongst the ashes.

Full of horror at what he heard, the Count ordered the Zingara to be kept a captive, declaring that she should burn at the stake after the storming of the castle; and on learning from poor Azucena's disjointed cries for mercy and help that she called upon the name of Manrico as her son, he exulted cruelly, knowing that he could now give his hated rival additional suffering through the torture of his mother.

No sooner had the Zingara been dragged away than the storming of the castle began; and although Manrico and his followers defended the fortress with utmost bravery, they were at last overwhelmed by the enemy's superior numbers, and were enforced to yield.

Manrico was taken prisoner, but Leonora, with the help of the faithful Ruiz, managed to escape to a place of safety. The Count de Luna, immediately after the conflict, returned to the royal castle of Aliaferia with his captured rival and Azucena the gipsy; and having thrust them together into a strong tower, he quickly made arrangements for their early execution. He gave orders that Manrico should be beheaded as a State prisoner, and the Zingara burnt as a witch; yet even this triumph over his hated enemy could not compensate him for the loss of Leonora, of whom he had heard nothing since the fall of Castellor.

But Leonora was in a safe hiding-place; and on the night before the execution, she made her way, protected by the darkness, into the palace grounds, and standing beneath the tower in which Manrico lay, she began to sing softly to let her lover know that she was near him.

Presently, Manrico, who had recognised her voice with joy, answered in the same fashion; but it was a passionate song of farewell that he sang, for he knew that he was to die at day-break.

On hearing this sad song, Leonora was filled with grief and despair, but determined to make a last effort to save her lover's life even at the sacrifice of her own; and as the Count de Luna a few moments later happened to come past that way, she rushed wildly forward, and falling on her knees, implored him to spare the life of the man she loved.

The Count, though amazed at her sudden appearance, greeted her gladly; but when he found that she was pleading for her lover, he was filled with jealousy once again, and refused her request, even though she offered to give her own life in exchange.

Then, seeing that nothing else would avail with the inexorable Count, Leonora, though she scarce could utter the fatal words, offered to become his bride, if he would only promise to spare the life of Manrico; and De Luna, triumphant now, agreed gladly, and bade her set the captive free at once.

Quickly Leonora went to seek the guards, but on the way she sucked some deadly poison from a ring she wore, for having gained her ends, she was determined to die rather than be wed to her lover's rival.

The captives in the tower had been passing a restless night, for Azucena was filled with terror at the thoughts of the sufferings she must endure on the morrow. To soothe her Manrico persuaded her to sing with him, that they might be reminded of their old happy life in the mountains of Biscaglia, where music had been a constant delight to them; and in the midst of the singing, the bolts were drawn, and Leonora entered the room.

With surprise and joy, Manrico clasped his beloved one in his arms; and then Leonora, explaining hurriedly that she had secured his freedom, besought her lover to fly at once, before his enemy had time to relent.

But Manrico, suspecting at once that Leonora had obtained his freedom by giving herself to his rival, would not stir; and instead, he began to pour forth reproaches upon her, deeming her false to him.

By this time, however, the poison she had swallowed was taking a quick, deadly effect upon Leonora, and, sinking to the ground, the poor girl told her lover, between dying gasps, that she had preferred to die rather than yield to his rival.

Overcome with despair and woe at the terrible sacrifice she had made for him, Manrico sprang forward to receive her in his arms as she expired; and at that moment the Count de Luna entered the room.

On seeing how he had been cheated of his expected bride, the Count, full of rage, ordered Manrico to instant execution; and seizing the Zingara by the arm, he dragged her roughly to the window to see her son die.

Azucena was half-dazed with grief and terror; but when the axe had fallen, and the brave Manrico was no more, she turned upon the taunting Count, and telling him in frenzied tones of the true birth of her adopted son, she ended her story by shrieking out: "Thou hast slain thine own brother!"

On hearing these terrible words, De Luna's gloating exultation was turned into the deepest horror; and thus, at last, was the gipsy avenged for the murder of her mother.

LA TRAVIATA

One night, towards the end of the reign of Le Grand Monarque, no more lively party could have been found in the whole of gay Paris, than that which was assembled in the salon of the beautiful and fascinating courtesan, Violetta Valèry; for with her accustomed extravagant generosity, the fair hostess had provided an entertainment upon the most lavish scale, so that the guests, feasted thus royally, and freed from conventional restraint, found it an easy matter to be merry, and to exercise their wit for the benefit of one another.

It was a brilliant company, too, for Violetta numbered amongst her admirers many scions of the nobility, besides the devotees of art; and since all were bent on pleasure, a constant flow of sparkling humour and joyous mirth on every side made it im-

possible for anyone to be dull.

The beautiful Violetta herself was one of the merriest of all that merry throng; for pleasure was as the very breath of life to her, and such a scene as this was her delight. Yet, in spite of natural inclination, her gaiety was not without physical effort; for indulgence in pleasure had developed inherent seeds of consumption with alarming rapidity, and already her frail form showed signs of the advance of the dread disease. Every now and then a sudden faintness would seize her, and the effort of moving amongst her guests was almost more than she could bear; and so, for the most part, she was compelled to recline upon her couch, from whence, however she rallied

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her guests with all her accustomed light-heartedness, and around which they circled as the centre of attraction.

Amongst the guests present to-night was a handsome young man of noble family, Alfred Germont,
who, although he had not yet confessed his passion,
had given his whole heart to the lovely courtesan, and
had adored her secretly for many months; and Violetta,
who, though she had had many lovers, had never
yet given her heart to anyone, had always felt a thrill
of joy when Alfred approached her, and knew that it
was love she felt at last. She had, however, tried to
treat him with careless indifference and to conquer
the passion that was slowly but surely enveloping her
whole being; for though she had not exercised any
such scruples with her former admirers, for his own
sake she felt it better that he should not become her
lover.

But Alfred was not to be discouraged by any such assumed coldness; and since he had determined to declare himself that very evening, it was not long

before he found an opportunity to do so.

Violetta presently suggested to her guests that they should crown their carousal with dancing; and upon this suggestion being received with acclamation, she invited them to repair to the dancing salon beyond, and, springing from her couch, declared merrily that she would lead them. No sooner had she spoken, however, than a sudden faintness seized her, and she fell back upon her couch, pale and trembling; but though her friends crowded round in anxious sympathy, she would not allow them to interrupt their pleasure on her account, bidding them with laughing carelessness to begin the dance without her, and to allow her to rest alone for a few moments.

No sooner had they gone than Violetta rose slowly, and looked anxiously at herself in the nearest mirror, sighing deeply at the sight of her pale face; and at that moment, Alfred returned to the room, and, hurrying to her side, besought her to take more care

of the life that was now so precious to him. He then went on to declare how passionately he loved her, and to entreat her to accept him as her lover; and though Violetta at first tried to treat the matter lightly and with gentle banter, she could not long struggle against the wild throbbing of her own heart, which told her only too plainly that she loved him in return. She therefore at last gave way to his pleading; and letting him now see that his love was returned, she determined to forego all her former scruples on his behalf, that they might both experience that deep wondrous happiness that only comes once in a life-time.

After this, the lovers met constantly, and at length became so enthralled in their passion that they could not bear to be separated; and at last, impatient of the society of their friends, they retired to a country house owned by Violetta some little distance out of Paris, where they could enjoy their bliss undisturbed.

Here they spent three months of perfect happiness, falling more deeply in love every day; and thus wrapped up in each other's sweet presence, they lived for one another alone, and seemed oblivious of the whole world.

But such absorbing joy could not last for ever, and

at length the dream was broken.

One day, on returning to the house after a few hours' absence spent in hunting, Alfred met Violetta's maid, Annina; and noticing that the girl appeared travel-stained and somewhat disturbed, he stopped to inquire the reason of her flustered state. Annina replied that she had just returned from Paris, whither she had been sent on business for her mistress; and upon being questioned further, she revealed the fact that she had been making arrangements for the sale of all Violetta's property and possessions, since the luxurious manner in which they had been living of late was expensive, and more means were needed to keep it up.

Filled with compunction that his own selfish enjoyment should have made him forgetful of such mundane but necessary matters, and horrified that Violetta should be about to make such a sacrifice on his behalf, Alfred declared that he would also go to Paris at once to settle the difficulty by paying over a large sum of money to prevent the sales; and, bidding Annina say nothing to her mistress about the matter, he set off for Paris immediately, saying that he would return in a few hours.

Violetta soon afterwards came from her room, and, entering a pretty salon that opened out on the garden, she began to look through a number of papers relating to her business affairs, and to read her letters; and amongst these latter she found a note from her most intimate friend, Flora Bervoix, requesting her

presence at a masked ball that evening.

As the happy Violetta was reading this note, and laughingly reflecting that Flora would look in vain for her that evening, a stranger was ushered into the room; and upon turning to greet her visitor, she beheld a gentleman of advanced years, and of haughty, aristocratic appearance, who immediately announced that he was the father of Alfred Germont, her lover, whom, he added in the same breath, she

was bringing to ruin.

Then as Violetta drew back indignantly at these words, Monsieur de Germont, though greatly impressed by her dazzling beauty and proud bearing, went on with the difficult task he had come to perform—that of persuading her to renounce his son, and leave him for ever; and in eloquent, but gentle tones, he declared that not only was she ruining Alfred's own social position as heir to one of the proudest names in France, but she was also the means of his sister's hand being refused in marriage, since her aristocratic suitor refused to enter their family whilst her brother was held in thrall by the lovely courtesan.

At first, Violetta hoped that her separation from

Alfred was only desired to be a temporary one, in order that his sister's marriage might be arranged; but when she found it was required that they should never meet again, she was overcome with grief, and declared passionately that this could never be, since she could not bear to be parted from the only man she had ever loved.

Though truly grieving for the pain he was inflicting upon one so lovely, M. de Germont still continued his pleading; and he now implored Violetta to reflect upon the good deed she would be doing by renouncing a lover to whose worldly welfare she was a stumbling block, reminding her that in the years to come, when her beauty should have faded, it would be a consolation to her to remember that she had thus restored peace to one home.

By this time, Violetta was weeping bitterly, for she knew only too well that M. de Germont spoke the truth, and that Alfred's position was ruined by his connection with herself; and her love for him was so great that she determined for his sake to make the sacrifice that was required, and in a broken voice declared that she would leave him that very day.

M. de Germont, overcome with gratitude and admiration for her noble resolve, embraced her tenderly, as though she were his own daughter, half regretting the harsh course he had felt compelled to take with one who possessed so generous and brave a heart; and he then retired to another room, there to await the return of Alfred, to whom Violetta promised to write a farewell message at once.

Having written this heart-rending note, Violetta was about to leave the room, when Alfred himself entered, having finished his business in Paris; and seeing her sad looks, he hurried to her side at once, inquiring anxiously for the cause of her gloom. Violetta, however, though terribly agitated, only declared that she wished to hear him say once again that he loved her; and when Alfred had amply satisfied her request, and embraced her tenderly, she

retired to the garden without informing him of her new resolve. Here she gave her note into the hands of a servant to deliver to his master; and then, entering a carriage that was already waiting for her, she drove away to Paris with great speed, firmly resolved to keep her promise of renouncing her lover for ever.

By the time the servant delivered the note, she was already far away; and when Alfred read her farewell message, and realised that she had left him with the intention of severing their connection, he was filled with despair. His grief, however, presently turned to jealousy, on perceiving on the table the note from Flora Bervoix, which Violetta had forgotten in her haste, for he immediately drew from this the mistaken conclusion that she had left him to attend Flora's ball that night, with a view to meeting a former admirer, the Baron Duphol, whom he had always regarded as a rival.

It was in vain that his father, who entered the room at this moment, endeavoured to calm the agitated young man, entreating him tenderly to think no more of Violetta, but to return to his own ancestral home, where a glad welcome awaited him; for Alfred, now consumed with bitter jealousy, declared that he would also attend the ball at the house of Flora Bervoix that night, to learn the truth, and avenge his wrongs. Heedless of his father's continued pleadings for him to return to his home, he set off for Paris at once; and M. de Germont, now afraid to leave his headstrong son when in such a disturbed state, followed him, hoping that he might yet be able to curb his passionate outburst in some measure.

That evening a brilliant company of gay pleasureseekers met at the house of Flora Bervoix, to enjoy the extravagant entertainment which she had prepared so lavishly; and amongst these guests was the Baron Duphol, together with other admirers of the beautiful Violetta. A grand new masque of Gipsies and Spanish Matadors and Picadors was one of the chief features of the entertainment; and it was shortly after this had taken place that Alfred entered, and mingled with the maskers and other guests at the

gaming tables.

Violetta also arrived about this time, and, in company with the Baron Duphol, who immediately took her on his arm on seeing her unescorted, moved from room to room, until the gaming tables were reached; and here, on beholding the very man she most wished to avoid, in order to keep her promise to the elder de Germont, the poor girl was so overcome with conflicting feelings, that she drew back, pale and trembling, afraid of what his greeting would be at seeing her in the company of his most detested rival.

Alfred was, indeed, strung up to a high pitch of excitement, and his jealousy and anger was increased tenfold at thus beholding the two together, his suspicions of Violetta's desertion of himself being now confirmed; but, assuming for the time being a careless tone, he challenged the Baron to play with him, which Duphol haughtily accepted.

The stakes were very high, and were doubled each time; and to the amazement of all, Alfred won again and again, his luck being so phenomenally great that the announcement of supper came as a relief to all.

Violetta, who had watched this contest between her lover and the Baron with the greatest anxiety, feeling that their scarcely suppressed passion would break forth on the slightest provocation, and that a duel might be the result, now found an opportunity of attracting Alfred's attention; and, having succeeded in drawing him apart from the guests, she implored him to leave the house, and thus avoid the danger she feared, should a quarrel take place between himself and the Baron. But Alfred, mistaking her motive, and thinking she only wished to save her new lover from his wrath, repulsed her with scorn; and now, quite beside himself with jealousy, he called

the guests from the supper table, and openly insulted her before them all, declaring that the favours he had accepted from her when she had professed to love him he now repudiated, and, flinging his heavilyweighted purse at her feet, he called them to witness that he had now paid her for all she had been to him.

Overcome with grief, and wounded to the heart at hearing these cruel words from one whom she loved so passionately, and for whom she had just made so great a sacrifice, poor Violetta fell back fainting into the arms of the sympathetic Flora; and the Baron Duphol immediately demanded satisfaction for the insult that had been put upon the lady he honoured with his attentions, a challenge which Alfred eagerly accepted, reckless of what might happen to him, but full of despair. M. de Germont. who had also witnessed this terrible scene with much grief, now led his agitated son away; and the entertainment ended in confusion and dismay.

Violetta now sank quickly, and grew weaker from day to day; for the dread disease that held her in remorseless grip had been accelerated and alarmingly developed by the terrible mental anguish she had been called upon to suffer, and her end grew rapidly nearer, for the doctor could give no hope of her

recovery.

One day, however, as she reclined in bed, being no longer able to rise, she received a letter from M. de Germont, which revived her drooping spirits, and made her feel almost better for the time being; for the proud aristocrat, who had once desired her to renounce his son's love, now entreated her accept it, for her heroic sacrifice and generous nature had completely won his heart, and he now desired above all things to see them united. He wrote that the duel had taken place, and that though Duphol had been wounded, he was recovering; and he added that Alfred was even now on his way to visit her, and to entreat her pardon, having been told of the noble

part she had played, and realising the mistake he had made in supposing that she had accepted

Duphol as a lover.

She had scarcely finished reading the letter when Alfred himself was announced, followed shortly afterwards by his father; and hastening forward with eager steps, the young man clasped his beloved one in his arms, and the two rejoiced together with full hearts.

But the delight of seeing her lover once more was too much of an effort for the enfeebled Violetta, who soon fell back fainting, and in a dying condition; and with anxious haste the doctor was summoned

immediately.

Alfred, full of horror at now beholding the frailty of the suffering girl's appearance, fell on his knees beside her, passionately imploring her to revive and live for his sake; and his father also added his entreaties, encouraging her by declaring that he hoped to call her his daughter yet.

Violetta, rejoicing at thus finding herself to be so greatly beloved, tried to make an effort to cast off the terrible faintness that constantly seized her; and upon the arrival of the doctor, in spite of the latter's look of pity, she declared that she must now live since such perfect happiness awaited her, and with a bright smile announced that she already felt better.

But scarcely had she spoken thus bravely, than she fell back upon her pillows with closed eyes; and as Alfred bent tenderly over her, he uttered a cry of grief and despair, for he saw that his beautiful and

beloved Violetta was dead!

THE MASKED BALL

(Il Ballo in Maschera)

In the city of Boston, Massachusetts, during the early colonial period, disturbances were constantly occurring between the two contending parties of Royalists and Puritans; and at a reception held one evening at the palace of the Governor, Richard, Earl of Warwick, a party of conspirators had mingled amongst the guests, in order to gather information as to the forthcoming movements of the Viceroy, against whose life they were plotting.

Amongst these conspirators were two negroes named Sam and Tom, who were the ringleaders in the affair; but though they and their friends regarded Richard as a tyrant, and hated him as such, they found that he was very strongly guarded by a large majority of devoted adherents, and that their chances

of making an attack upon him were small.

The Earl's chief supporter and most trusted official was his own private secretary, a Creole named Renato, who served his leader with a whole-hearted devotion, loving him as his dearest and most honoured friend; but, though Richard returned his Secretary's affection, and was sincerely grateful for his devotion, he had avoided him of late, and had seemed to shrink from their customary intercourse.

The reason for this was the fact that Richard had unfortunately conceived a deep and over-mastering passion for Renato's beautiful young wife, Adelia; and though torn with remorse for the wrong he thus did to his friend, he yet could not conquer the love that

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had grown up in his heart. In spite of the fact that he had refrained from declaring his passion, he had not succeeded in hiding it from the fair Adelia, who soon as ardently returned it, although she also felt deep remorse at the circumstance; and the unfortunate pair were thus wretchedly situated at the time of the Puritan conspiracy.

On the night of the reception, Richard was too much occupied by his tender thoughts of Adelia to notice that many of his avowed foes were actually present in his own house; and in spite of the whispered warnings of the devoted Renato, he continued to regard the strained political position as exaggerated, and merely scoffed at the idea of serious

trouble.

During the meeting, a petition was presented to the Governor for the transporting of an old negress named Ulrica, who was reported to be a sorceress and dealer in the black art; and, utterly regardless of his own personal danger, Richard laughingly declared that before the witch was driven away he would himself consult her on the morrow under a disguise, and urge her to predict the fate in store for him.

The negro conspirators overheard this arrangement; and, hurrying away, they proceeded to gather their party together to plan the assassination of the Governor at the abode of the sorceress, since he would

probably be unattended.

In spite of Renato's eager entreaty for him to abandon such a mad scheme of playing into the hands of his enemies, Richard still determined to carry it out; and on the morrow, in the disguise of a sailor, attended only by his faithful page, Edgar, and a few followers, he proceeded to the hut of Ulrica.

Here, surrounded by the usual weird appurtenances of a dealer in magic and sorcery, he found the old hag, who was already granting audiences to certain superstitious folk who had come to have their fortunes

told.

As the disguised Earl hung back a while in the

gloom of the smoky hut, he observed a veiled lady approach the so-called witch, and ask in a low tone for a potion to cure a guilty love; and to his surprise he recognised the soft voice as that of his beloved Adelia, and was filled with joy to thus learn for certain that she returned his passion, even though she sought a remedy to destroy it. In reply the hag bade her cull at midnight a certain herb, which grew only in a desolate spot outside the city, where murderers were hanged; and as Adelia hurried away, after declaring her intention to seek the herb that very night, her listening lover vowed in his heart that he would follow her thither, in order to protect her from harm.

It was now Richard's turn to have his fortune told; and to the alarm of his attendants, Ulrica, with dramatic intensity, declared that he would shortly meet his death by violence, and that the fatal blow would be struck by the person who should next take his hand. Laughing at the prediction, Richard held out his hand to his friends in turn, who, however, all drew back superstitiously; but when Renato presently appeared on the scene, in order to draw his master away before his disguise should be penetrated by his enemies, the Earl deliberately seized his hand in defiance of the witch's words, well knowing that

his secretary was devoted to him.

Late that evening, as midnight approached, Adelia, in fear and trembling, yet firmly resolved in her purpose, made her way with hurried steps to the murderers' gibbet outside the city boundary; and in this wild and lonely spot, which was shunned by all as haunted, she sought the magic herb with which she hoped to quench a love she knew to be disloyal to her husband; and here she was closely followed by Richard, who, as she suddenly uttered an exclamation of terror at the sound of his footsteps, hurried to her side and revealed himself to her. Then, as the moonlight showed him the relief and joy in her face at his greeting, he could no longer retain control of

his long-repressed feelings, and, folding her passionately in his arms, he declared his love for her; and Adelia, though still announcing her resolve to banish him from her heart, could not but admit that she returned his love.

This brief moment of supreme happiness was soon rudely interrupted; for angry shouts and approaching flashing lights showed that some disturbance was afoot. The terrified Adelia just had time to drop a heavy veil over her face, when her husband, Renato, dashed up to Richard and eagerly besought him to return with all haste to the palace, declaring that the negro conspirators, Tom and Sam, had tracked him to this spot, and were now approaching quickly with a party of adherents to assassinate him.

At first Richard flatly refused to make his escape, fearing for the fate of the hapless Adelia; but upon Renato promising to escort the lady back to the city, he agreed to fly from the certain danger that threatened him, binding his friend, however, to a solemn promise not to attempt to penetrate the secret

of his charge's identity.

Renato, not having the slightest suspicion as to who the veiled lady might be, and anxious only for his revered chief's safety, gave the required promise; whereupon Richard dashed away into the darkness,

and reached the palace in safety.

When he had gone Renato took the trembling Adelia by the hand, and hurried her away also; but the pair were quickly spied by the approaching conspirators, who rushed forward to capture them with cries of triumph, believing that they had secured the prize they sought. When, however, they discovered that instead of the tyrant Governor it was Renato they had seized, they were filled with angry disappointment; and upon their indulging in coarse jests and taunts at the expense of the veiled lady, the secretary, eager to defend his master's sweetheart, drew his sword and furiously defied the howling mob.

At this, Adelia, afraid for her husband's life.

hurried to his side, entreating him not to anger the people; and, in her agitation, her veil became disarranged, so that her identity was revealed to all.

When Renato thus saw that it was his own beloved wife he had surprised in the company of the Governor, whom he consequently supposed to be her accepted lover, he was almost stunned with the shock of the discovery; and in his rage and despairing grief, he could scarcely refrain from killing Adelia, as she now fell on her knees before him. However, her piteous entreaties to be at least permitted to bid farewell to her little child, and her passionate declaration of innocence, restrained him for the moment; and sternly bidding her return home with him, he resolved to take vengeance upon the Governor, for whom the love and devotion he had borne was now turned to hate.

With this purpose in view, he quickly pacified the angry conspirators by declaring that he intended to join their ranks; and during the succeeding days he held secret interviews with them, in order to arrange a successful opportunity for the assassination of the Governor.

Meanwhile, Adelia was plunged in the deepest despair, fearing that her husband's jealous anger would lead him to some desperate deed; and full of anxiety for the safety of the man she loved, she endeavoured to learn all she could of the plot which she guessed was being hatched against his life.

One day, on suddenly entering a room in which Renato was consulting with the negroes, Sam and Tom, she was coldly commanded by her husband to draw one piece of folded paper from three which had been placed in a vase; for the three conspirators, having now arranged to assassinate the Governor at a splendid masked ball he was to give in a day or two, had determined to draw lots as to who should deliver the fatal blow.

Adelia, fearing to disobey her husband's command, drew forth a paper from the vase; and, horrified by Renato's exultant tone as he announced that it bore his name, she hurried away to her chamber, full of terrifying thoughts. She now felt assured that her husband intended to kill Richard; and suspecting that he hoped to accomplish his fell purpose on the night of the masked ball, she determined, though in no mood for festivity, to attend the function, in order that she might seek an opportunity to warn her lover.

In spite of the deep passion he had conceived for Adelia, Richard had never intended that his love should injure her in any way, and after a mighty struggle with himself, he had determined that they should be parted from each other; and to this end he made arrangements for the appointment of Renato to a high official position in England. He therefore caused the necessary document making the appointment to be duly drawn up; and on the night of the masked ball he carried it with him, intending to hand it to Renato during the evening.

His friends, knowing that the conspirators had been actively engaged of late, endeavoured to persuade him not to attend the ball; but Richard, ever careless of danger, laughed at their fears as usual, and donning a black domino and mask, boldly

mingled with the merry dancers.

Renato, attired in the conspirators' chosen colours of azure and scarlet, also mingled with the dazzling throng, seeking for the Governor; but not knowing his disguise, he was getting impatient of the delay in his plans, when he happened to meet the giddy young page, Edgar, from whom he gained the information he sought.

Meanwhile, Adelia, masked and enveloped in a white domino, also sought for Richard; and at last, to her joy, she heard his voice, and recognised him, in spite of his mask and black domino. Quickly making herself known to him, she eagerly besought her lover to leave the ball-room at once, declaring to him her suspicions of the danger that threatened him: but Richard, still careless of his own safety, would

not hurry away, but, instead, proceeded to tell her of the plans he had made for their safety from temptation by the appointment in England he had arranged for her husband. He then took a tender farewell of her, resolving not to see her again; but even as he still held her by the hand, Renato, having at last tracked him, dashed forward in a passion of jealousy, and stabbed him to the heart.

As Richard fell back dying, he painfully drew forth the document making the new appointment, and held it towards Renato; and then, as the horrified guests gathered round, with his last gasping breath he declared that Adelia was entirely innocent and pure, and that in his love for her he had never designed her hurt nor aimed at her peace.

With these words he expired; and Renato, now filled with agonising remorse, realised too late that in his jealous frenzy he had slain a man, who, so far from being base, had faithfully respected the honour of his friend under a terrible temptation.

AÏDA

During the reign of one of the great Pharaohs of Egypt, Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, declared war against the Egyptians, and invaded their country. In spite of their daring, however, the Ethiopians were beaten time after time; for the Egyptian army was then at the height of its glory, and was victorious wherever it went.

After one of his most crushing defeats, Amonasro had to bear yet another hitter blow, for amongst the many captives carried away by the all-conquering Egyptians, was his own fair young daughter, the

Princess Aïda.

Although unaware of their lovely captive's high rank, the conquerers guarded her with special care, because of her dazzling beauty and gentle grace; and upon her arrival in Memphis, the great Pharaoh presented her as a slave to his daughter Amneris. The Princess of Egypt was so pleased with the sweet charms of the girl-captive, that she refused to regard her as merely an ordinary slave, but treated her instead with the familiarity and affection of a sister; and so, for a time, Aïda's bonds rested but lightly upon her, and except for a natural grief for the sufferings and wrongs of her beloved country, and her own enforced exile, she had little to trouble her. But after a while, when the joy of a great love came into her life, a change took place; and then for the captive maid black storm-clouds of woe quickly gathered around.

Radames, a handsome young officer in the King's

Guards, owing to his high position, had frequent access into the presence of the Princess and her attendants; and from the very first moment his eyes rested upon the beautiful and gentle Aïda a passionate love for her sprang up within his heart, which deepened and strengthened daily. His love was quickly returned by the captive maid; and although at first her conscience blamed her for loving the enemy of her country, she could not long struggle against a passion that would not be subdued, and so resigned her heart unreservedly into the keeping of

the handsome young Egyptian.

Their joy, however, though they tried to keep it secret, was not long permitted to remain unclouded; for the noble Radames was also beloved by the Princess Amneris, whose proud and passionate nature could brook no rival in her affections. For long, the fair Amneris had cherished her passion, and had vainly longed to have it requited; but Radames, though he quickly guessed her secret, refused to meet her open advances, for he was too noble to accept favours from one whom he could not love. Yet, in spite of the young officer's coldness, Amneris had always hoped to win his affection in the end; but with the advent of Aïda, her hopes were quickly dashed to the ground. For although Radames and the beautiful slave at first tried to hide their love, the jealous eyes of the Princess speedily detected it; and then, determined that her passion should not be slighted, she still used all the means in her power to obtain her heart's desire.

War was soon again declared between the rival countries, the King of Ethiopia having once more gathered a large army together and already invested Thebes; and the Egyptians having also massed their mighty forces, instructions were given to the priests of Isis to learn the will of the goddess as to who should lead them against the foe. On a certain day, the priests declared that the dread goddess had spoken; and Pharaoh then called together all the

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officers of his forces that he might announce to them the name of their chosen leader.

The young Radames, who had already proved himself brave and fearless in battle, had great ambition to distinguish himself in the coming campaign in a greater degree; and upon hearing that the goddess had named the champion of Egypt, he was filled with eager anticipation, hardly daring to hope that the chosen one might prove to be himself, yet longing above all things that it might indeed be so, for he now had a greater incentive than ever to win renown. because of the exquisite joy of laying his laurels at the feet of his beloved Aïda-and as he wandered early into the vast hall of the royal palace on the day on which the announcement was to be made, his mind was full of this sweet, delirious thought. But his happy reflections were presently interrupted by the entrance of the Princess of Egypt, who, quickly noting his rapt expression, desired him to tell her of his pleasant thoughts; and Radames, on his guard at once, replied that, carried away by his ambition, he had been daring to hope that he might be the leader chosen to head the Egyptian army.

But Amneris was not satisfied with this, and softly asked if his mind were not rather occupied with some fairer attraction to be found in Memphis; and as Radames was vainly endeavouring to frame an answer to this pertinent question, the object of his happy thoughts, the beautiful Aïda herself, came into the hall with sad, downcast looks, for she had been

weeping for the sufferings of her country.

As the young officer's eyes fell upon the fair form of his beloved one, he could not repress an exclamation of delight; and this, coupled with the tender glances unconsciously exchanged between the lovers, confirmed the former suspicions of the Princess, whose heart was straightway filled with a consuming jealousy. The entrance of Pharaoh with his ministers, officers, and guards, together with the priests of Isis, prevented any outburst of passion at that

moment; and as soon as the Court was assembled,

the great business of the day went forward.

After the King had scornfully reminded the company of the presumption of the Ethiopian monarch in daring to invade their land, and when the warriors had answered his proud call to arms with eager cries of vengeance, the name of the champion chosen by the goddess Isis to lead them to victory was declared; and amidst a sudden hush of breathless expectancy, Pharaoh announced in a clear, ringing voice: "The chosen leader of our host is Radames, the Bravel."

A wave of overwhelming joy swept through the heart of Radames at this glad fulfilment of his dearest wish; and as he breathed a prayer of gratitude to the goddess who had thus favoured him, a thunder of applause burst from the assembled company, for though but young in years, the chosen warrior was

honoured and beloved by all.

The Princess Amneris then came forward, and placed the royal standard of Egypt in the hands of Radames, bidding him in a voice that trembled with emotion to bear it ever into the paths of victory and renown; for she was filled with exaltation that the man she loved was chosen for this honour, and already looked ahead to the time when he should return, covered with glory, a hero for whom even the hand of a Princess of Egypt would not be too great a reward.

But Aïda was filled with despair, being torn by conflicting feelings; and when all the resplendent company had departed to the Temple of Vulcan to witness the investiture and dedication of Radames to his heaven-chosen office, she remained behind.

that none might witness her sorrow.

"How dare I wish victory to my beloved one, when that means defeat and bondage for my native land?" she murmured, in anguish. "Shall I desire my own royal father, my brothers, and my people to be destroyed? Yet, if they are victorious, my lover will Aida 381

be dishonoured and ruined! Alas, why am I so tormented! Unhappy maid that I am, to love the enemy of my country!"

Overcome by these torturing thoughts, poor Aïda crept away to her own chamber, where her tears might flow unhindered; for she dared not trust herself where curious eyes might witness her emotion.

Meanwhile, the dedication service was taking place in the Temple of Vulcan; and here, amidst great pomp and the performance of many strange and mysterious rites, Radames was solemnly invested by Ramphis, the High Priest, with the sacred arms pertaining to his position as leader of the Egyptian army. When the investiture was over, the priests and assembled warriors broke into a sacred song of dedication and encouragement; and as Radames went forth from the Temple, he was filled with enthusiasm for the great cause he had embraced and eager anticipation of success.

Nor were these anticipations vain; for the Egyptian forces again carried all before them, and defeated the

Ethiopians on every side.

Thus it came about that, after driving the enemies of his country away from the land, the young Radames returned to Memphis a victorious hero, covered with glory and honour, and followed by a long train of captives to make his triumph complete.

Amongst these captives, though unknown to all, was Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, himself, who having gone into the field disguised as an ordinary officer, had escaped recognition; and though his proud spirit revolted against the degradation of being thus taken prisoner, he yet went to Memphis with the hope that he might there meet with his lost daughter, and also learn something of his enemies' plans.

On the day on which Radames was to make his triumphal entry into the city, great preparations were made to receive him with all the pomp and magnificence usually associated with such a pageant;

and within the royal palace, the Princess of Egypt commanded her slaves to sing the praises of her hero, that the weary waiting-time might pass the quicker. For Amneris was filled with joyous expectation; for she felt that the victor's reward would certainly be her own hand in marriage, and thus her dearest hopes be realised. She therefore listened to the laudatory songs of her slaves with unrestrained joy: but upon the entry of Aïda, her brow grew dark. for the beautiful slave's presence at that moment revived the jealous feelings which had remained dormant during the absence of Radames.

In order to prove whether Aïda's love was still the same, Amneris, in the course of conversation, announced that Radames had been killed in battle, and her frown grew deeper still when Aïda, full of grief at this terrible news, broke forth into a tearful lament. As a further proof, however, she added immediately: "Nay, I did but wish to fright thee! Calm thyself, for the brave Radames lives yet!"

Upon hearing this, Aïda, her face transfigured with joy, sank upon her knees, and uttered a prayer of gratitude that her beloved one had been saved: and then, Amneris, unable to restrain her jealous anger any longer, sprang forward with blazing eyes, crying with haughty fury: "What, thou, a slave, to dare to aspire to one whom the daughter of Pharaon deigns to love! Know, rash maiden, that the Prin-

cess of Egypt will brook no rival!"

Then, unheeding Aïda's gentle plea for mercy, the passionate Princess bade her prepare to meet her doom, since she was determined to humble her to the dust for her presumption; but at that moment, hearing sounds which told her that the festival was about to commence, her mood suddenly changed to expectancy again, and she went to join her father upon the throne which had been set up at the city gates, through which the triumphal procession had to pass, bidding Aïda attend her.

Radames was received with great kindness and

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favour by Pharaoh, who showered praises and thanks upon him for the mighty deeds he had performed; and as the young conqueror knelt, overcome, at the foot of the throne, the Princess Amneris with her own hands placed the crown of victory upon his brow

with gentle tenderness.

The King now desired to see the prisoners who had been taken in battle; and as the captives one by one passed the throne, Aïda uttered a cry of surprise and grief, and, running into the arms of Amonasro, who was one of them, greeted him tenderly as her father. Amonasro, however, whispered to her not to disclose his true identity; and so when the company gathered round, on hearing that he was the beautiful slave-girl's father, the disguised king related a feasible story as to his capture, describing himself as an ordinary Ethiopian officer, which was readily enough believed.

Pharaoh now desired Radames to name any favour he pleased, which should be immediately granted; and the young victor, whose heart was as yet unhardened by the fortunes of war, besought the King to set all

the captives free, as his reward.

But Ramphis, the High Priest, and the other counsellors declared that this would be an act of folly; and when they saw that Pharaoh would not deny the request that had been made, they entreated that at least it would be better to retain Aïda's father as a hostage of peace. To this, Pharaoh agreed, giving orders that all the other captives should be set free; and then, leading Amneris forward, he placed her hand in that of Radames, declaring before all the people that the Princess of Egypt was the prize he had destined for the deliverer of the country.

Amneris was radiant with joy, having thus secured her dearest wish, and feeling that she need no longer fear Aïda as a rival; but Radames was plunged in despair, for he was determined to wed no other maid but Aïda, whom he loved so passionately, and for whose sweet sake he had crowned himself with laurels. Aïda, too, was filled with grief, for Radames

wed, naught remained to her but death.

Radames, however, saw that nothing was to be gained just then by refusing to accept the reward offered to him; and so he prudently permitted himself to be regarded as the affianced husband of Amneris, trusting to find some means of disentangling himself later on. He still saw Aïda from time to time in the palace, and sometimes found means to address a few words to her; but these opportunities were few and far between; and at last, despairing of ever securing a sufficiently long interview in which to talk over their plans, he invited her to meet him on the eve before his wedding-day, outside the Temple of Isis.

Now, Amonasro, who was also lodged in the Palace, had quickly observed the love that existed between Aïda and Radames; and having learnt from the soldiers that the scattered forces of Ethiopia had once more been banded together to invade Egypt, he determined to make use of his daughter's love as a means of securing information as to the Egyptians' war plans. For this reason, having overheard the arrangement made for the lovers' meeting, he managed to creep unseen by the guards from the palace, and made his way to the Temple of Isis.

As it happened, the Princess Amneris had also arranged to visit the Temple of Isis that night, in order to offer prayers and incense to the goddess on this the last evening of hor maidenhood, in accordance with an ancient custom; and attended by womenslaves and guards, she arrived soon after darkness had set in, and was immediately conducted by Ramphis, the High Priest, into the Temple, where she began

her vigil.

No sooner had the Princess and her party retired within the sacred building, than Aïda, alone and unattended, drew near, trembling with fear; and almost immediately she was joined by her father, who had awaited her arrival in a hiding-place close by.

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Quickly reassuring the frightened maiden, Amonasro informed her of the service he wished her to do for him; and after declaring that his reassembled forces were already prepared and waiting for battle, reminding her also of the wretched condition of their people, he entreated her to discover from her lover by what path the Egyptians intended to surprise their enemies, a fact which, in the hands of the Ethiopians, meant success to their enterprise.

At first, Aïda refused indignantly to ask her lover to be disloyal to the arms he bore; but upon Amonasro declaring reproachfully and angrily that he would no longer regard her as his daughter if she thus refused to help her country, she reluctantly promised to seek the information needed. Amonasro now retired to his hiding-place; and as he departed, Radames came up to the meeting-place, and clasped

Aïda in his arms in a passionate embrace.

When the first joy of meeting was over, Aïda asked her lover to tell her of his plans, for since his nuptials with the Princess were now so near at hand, it seemed well-nigh impossible for him to avoid the step, which was the express command of the King and the wish of the people; and the hopelessness of the situation made her have misgivings whether he would care to make so great a sacrifice for her sake. Radames, however, declared that not all the wealth of Egypt could make up to him for the loss of Aïda's love; and, with eager enthusiasm, he declared to her that early next morning he would join the Egyptian forces now under arms, and after leading them once more to victory, he would return triumphant to the city, and then, telling the King of his love for the Ethiopian maid, beseech him of his mercy to grant him her hand in marriage as a reward.

But Aïda was not satisfied with this, knowing that the rage and jealousy of Amneris would never per-

mit them to marry; and she cried eagerly:

"Nay, there is but one course, my beloved! Let us fly to-night, and in a far-away land, where we are

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not known, we may pass our life in perfect joy

together!"

Then, seeing that Radames hesitated at this suggestion, which meant his resignation of all the glory and renown he had won, she thrust him from her, exclaiming passionately: "Ah, then, you love me not! Return to the Princess of Egypt, and in the enjoyment of her embraces forget poor Aïda, who would now gladly seek death!"

This was more than Radames could endure; and, clasping Aïda in his arms once again, he declared that they would indeed fly that night, since her love was more to him than anything else the world could

offer.

Intoxicated with the intensity of their passion, the lovers prepared to carry out their resolve at once; but, as they were about to depart, Aïda, remembering with a pang her father's command, said in a trembling voice: "How shall we escape being seen by the Egyptian soldiers?"

"All will be well," returned Radames reassuringly, "if we avoid the Pass of Napata, where they lie

hidden!"

No sooner had he spoken these fatal words, than Amonasro, having thus learnt the secret he had longed to possess, sprang from his hiding-place, and boldly approaching the lovers, announced to the young Egyptian that he was the King of Ethiopia.

Radames was now overcome with dismay that he had, though unconsciously, betrayed his country's cause into the hands of her enemies; but Amonasro, declaring that no blame could ever attach to him, entreated him to join the Ethiopian ranks, where glory awaited him, and the hand of Aïda should be his reward.

At that moment, however, the Princess Amneris, and Ramphis, the High Priest, emerged from the Temple, having heard all that had passed; and calling to the guards, they bade them seize the three offenders at once. Radames, calling to Amonasro and Aïda to

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fly for their lives, engaged the attention of the guards until he knew that the Ethiopian King and his daughter had escaped to a safe distance; and then, nobly scorning to avoid the just wrath of the monarch whom he had so unwittingly betrayed, he yielded himself without a struggle into the hands of the High Priest, and was carried away captive to await his doom.

A few days later, Radames was brought to the Hall of Judgment within the royal palace, to be tried as a traitor, and to receive the sentence of death; but as the guards were conducting him thither, they were accosted by the Princess Amneris, who imperiously

demanded to speak with the prisoner.

The guards having fallen back respectfully, Amneris addressed Radames, asking him if he was prepared to die the death of a traitor, or if he desired to live; for the proud Princess was still unable to repress the love which consumed her, in spite of her anger that it was not returned, and she was determined to offer the object of her affections a means of saving his life.

Radames, however, answered sorrowfully that he had no further desire to live, since Aïda was lost to him for ever; for he believed her to be dead, and in his grief he even accused the Princess of being the cause of her death. But Amneris declared that this was not so, since Aïda still lived; for though her father had been slain in the battle that had just taken place, his daughter had managed to escape, though none knew of her whereabouts.

Then, with passionate carnestness, Amneris besought Radames to renounce all thought of Aïda for ever, thus hoping that she might herself reign in his heart at last; and she added that if he would do so, she would intercede for his life with the King, who loved her so well that he would grant her even so great a request as this. But Radames declared staunchly that no power on earth could ever induce him to thrust the dear image of Aïda from his heart; and since his beloved one was now lost to him, he

should welcome death with gladness.

"Go, then, and die!" cried Amneris, enraged that her love should be thus slighted yet again; and then, as Radames passed into the Hall of Judgment, she burst into a wild paroxysm of weeping, knowing that nothing could now save him, since once in the presence of his judges, his doom was sealed.

Full of remorse that she had not called him back, she crouched near the portal, and listened to what passed within; for though in her heart she realised that Radames was innocent, yet she knew that he would be condemned, since he had done, though un-

wittingly, a traitor's deed.

To the accusations made against him, Radames answered not a word, for in spite of his clear conscience, he also knew that defence was useless; and when the High Priest pronounced the doom of living incarceration as the traitor's sentence, he bowed his head in resignation, having no longer the desire to live.

Amneris, however, was filled with rage on hearing the cruel sentence passed upon the man she still loved; and when the priests issued forth from the Hall of Judgment, she passionately commanded them to revoke their judgment. But Ramphis, the High Priest, whose might and sacred power could not be encroached upon even by a Princess of Egypt, sternly replied, "The traitor's doom has gone forth, and none can alter it!"

Then, heedless of the wailing curses that followed him, the relentless Priest passed on, and the despairing Princess was left alone with her sorrow and remorse.

remorse.

Meanwhile, Radames was conducted to the Temple of Vulcan, and ushered into the subterranean vault in which he was to be buried alive; and as the stone that covered the opening was gradually lowered, the priests broke into the sacred hymn of death.

Radames stood resigned and unafraid upon the

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bottom step of the crypt; but just as the stone was falling into its socket, he heard a soft sigh behind him, and, turning, beheld, ere the last ray of light faded, the trembling form of his beloved Aida!

Filled with amazement and horror that one so young and lovely should thus be entombed with him, Radames pressed and beat frantically upon the roof of the vault; but the stone had now fallen into its place, and he was powerless to dislodge it. As he sank despairing upon the step, Aïda groped her way through the darkness to his side; and in a sweet, exultant voice, bade him gently to be comforted, since, having foreseen his doom, she had of her own free will crept unobserved by the priests into the vault, preferring to die with him, rather than to live on alone.

Filled with gratitude at this wonderful proof of love and devotion. Radames passionately embraced the triumphant Aïda, and thus clasped in each other's arms, the lovers calmly awaited their end, rejoicing that though in life they had been forced asunder, yet in death they were not divided!

OTHELLO

A HANDSONE Moor, named Othello, a man of noble nature and high intellect, had risen by his own ability and prowess to the envied position of a general in the Venetian Army; and because of his honourable reputation and excellent skill in relating stories of the battles and adventures he had engaged in, he was a welcome guest in many of the great houses of Venice.

But Othello himself cared only to visit at the house of a certain Venetian gentleman named Brabantio, who had a fair daughter named Desdemona; for the beauty, gentleness, and virtue of this lady had completely enslaved the heart of the handsome Moor, who grew to love her with all the strength of his passionate nature. And as the fair Desdemona listened to the glowing tales of peril, adventure, and victory related by the dusky visitor, she hung upon his words with eager interest, weeping for his woes and rejoicing at his escapes; and at last she grew to love him so dearly that all her thoughts became bound up in him.

Othello knew that Brabantio would be horrified at the mere thought of giving his daughter to a Moor; and so he very easily persuaded Desdemona to

enter into a secret marriage with him.

Brabantio was filled with great indignation when he was afterwards told of their union, and, accusing Othello of having resorted to magic spells in winning the affections of the maiden, he took the whole matter before the Duke of Venice; but when the royal judge had listened to Othello's simple tale of

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love, and Desdemona's sweet declaration of trust in her husband, he announced that their mutual affection had come about in a perfectly natural way, and that no magic had been used.

So Brabantio was obliged to give his daughter to her lawful husband; and almost immediately after the case had been settled, Othello, as leader of the Venetian Army, was sent on a military expedition to

the island of Cyprus.

The Moor departed first, leaving Desdemona to follow in the care of his lieutenant, Cassio; and upon their arrival in Cyprus great rejoicings were held.

Now. Othello had another confidential officer. whose name was Iago, and who served him as his Ancient; and this Iago, who was of an envious, cruel, and bitter nature, had a grudge against Cassio, because the latter had been made lieutenant, a post he coveted himself. He also envied the happiness of Othello; for he himself had cherished a passion for Desdemona, and had been filled with bitterness at her preference for the noble Moor. He therefore determined to bring Cassio quickly out of favour with his master, so that he himself might be advanced; and with this object he devised the cunning and cruel plan of making Othello believe that Cassio was the lover of Desdemona, and thus, by bringing misery on all, to satisfy his vengeful and envious nature.

He first of all led the unsuspecting Cassio into the folly of drinking too deeply one night when on guard in the camp; and then, as squabbling arose in consequence of this, he brought Othello upon the

scene to learn the cause of the disturbance.

The Moor was so displeased with the foolish conduct of Cassio that he would not permit him to be his lieutenant any longer; but the cunning Iago was not yet satisfied, and he determined to use the disgraced officer still further, in order to bring woe upon Othello himself, whose happiness in possession of the lovely Desdemona he was so eager to destroy.

He therefore now pretended to be Cassio's friend, and advised him earnestly to ingratiate himself with the Lady Desdemona, who might be induced to intercede with her husband on behalf of the erring officer; and as Iago's own wife, Emilia, was chief lady-in-waiting to Desdemona, it was quite easy for the necessary interviews to be arranged.

The gentle Desdemona, with never a thought of evil, received Cassio very kindly, and promised to

plead for him with her husband, saying:

". . . Assure thee, If I do vow a friendship I'll perform it To the last article . . . Therefore, be merry, Cassio, For thy solicitor shall rather die Than give thy cause away!"

Unfortunately, just as Cassio bent to kiss the lady's hand in gratitude as he departed, Othello himself appeared, accompanied by Iago, who cunningly drew his attention to this little scene.

The first faint shadow of jealousy thus crept into the mind of Othello; and when Desdemona presently began to plead for Cassio, although he answered her with fair words, he had already begun to doubt her in his heart.

After Desdemona had retired, Iago ruthlessly continued his wicked scheme of sowing the seeds of doubt in Othello's passionate heart; and the Moor quickly began to suffer the sharp pangs of jealousy, and to cherish a secret wrath against his innocent wife.

"Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something,
nothing;

'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands; But he that filches from me my good name, Robs me of that which not enriches him,

And makes me poor indeed!"

said Iago, in a careless tone; and with such enig-

matical, subtle words did he set the poison of doubt

Encouraged by the quick success of his villainy, Iago now bade his wife Emilia to procure for him a certain richly worked handkerchief belonging to Desdemona, which had been Othello's first gift to her during their courtship; and Emilia, having no suspicion of treachery, but humbly obedient to her husband's wishes, secured the pretty trifle for him without the knowledge of her mistress. Iago then found an opportunity to make Othello believe that he had discovered this handkerchief amongst the belongings of Cassio, and that it had been given to the ex-lieutenant by Desdemona; and he also added casually that he had often heard Cassio murmur the name of Desdemona with loving emphasis in his sleep.

This announcement filled Othello with such rage that he rushed furiously at Iago, and flung him to the ground; and when next he met Desdemona he broke out into such a stormy tirade that the gentle

lady was terrified.

As the days went on the poison of jealousy so artfully administered by the ruthless Iago began to permeate the whole being of the unfortunate Moor to such an extent that he put an evil construction upon the most innocent remarks of Desdemona; and the bewildered wife became very unhappy as she noted the altered behaviour of her husband, being quite unable to account for such a change, since her love for him was as deep and true as ever.

One day there came ambassadors from Venice with letters on State matters for Othello, in which he was bidden to return home; and upon the messengers asking for the absent Cassio, who was to be deputed to the Moor's place, Desdemona replied that the lieutenant had been disgraced, but that she was constantly pleading for his restoration to favour, since she had much regard for him. On hearing these words, spoken in all innocence and kindly feeling

for one in trouble, Othello's mad jealousy was roused again; and in a wild outburst of rage he struck Desdemona a rough blow, and then fell to the ground in a convulsive fit brought on by his deep emotion.

That night, as Desdemona retired to rest, she was filled with sad thoughts and strange forebodings of ill; and as Emilia helped her to disrobe, she sang a low, plaintive song, which she declared had been sung to her mother on her death-bed, and which had haunted the unhappy lady all day. These were the words of the song:

"The poor soul sat singing by a sycamore tree, Sing all a green willow; Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee, Sing willow, willow; willow: The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans,

The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans, Sing willow, willow; Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;

Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones; Sing willow, willow, willow!"

When this sad ditty came to an end, Emilia left her mistress in bed; and the troubled Desdemona at

length fell asleep.

Presently Othello entered the chamber with his sword in his hand, intending to kill her; but she looked so fair and tranquil as she slept that he could not bear to shed her blood, though he did not mean to go back from his resolve. He still loved her tenderly, in spite of the overmastering jealousy which had eaten into his heart, and his firm belief that she had permitted Cassio to be her lover; and bending over the bed he kissed her sweet lips passionately, murmuring softly:

"O balmy breath, that doth almost persuade Justice to break her sword!—one more, one more—Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee, And love thee after:—One more, and that's the last: So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep, But they are cruel tears: This sorrow's heavenly; It strikes where it doth love!"

The hot kisses of Othello awakened Desdemona, who was much startled at finding her husband bending over her with such a fierce look in his passionate eyes; nor was she reassured when Othello asked sternly:

"Have you prayed to-night, Desdemona?"

The poor lady assured him that she had offered up her prayers as usual, and asked him the meaning of such a strange question; and then Othello declared that it was his resolve to kill her, again fiercely

denouncing her as untrue to her wifely vows.

It was in vain that the hapless Desdemona protested her innocence, and pleaded piteously for mercy; so firmly was Othello convinced of her perfidy, owing to the false insinuations of Iago, that nothing could now make him believe in her innocence, and in a paroxysm of jealous passion he seized the pillows and bed-coverings and pressed them over his victim until she was stifled.

Just then Emilia's voice was heard calling loudly for admission; and thinking she had come to bring news of Cassio, whose death he had already ordered, Othello opened the door and let her into the room. But Emilia reported that Cassio was not dead, though wounded; and as she related this news the weak voice of the expiring Desdemona murmured softly, "A guiltless death I die!"

Emilia hurried to the bedside, just as her beloved mistress breathed her last; and filled with horror as she thus understood that Othello had slain his fair wife, she uttered loud cries of grief and alarm, so that a number of attendants hurried into the room, amongst them Iago and the Venetian Ambassadors.

Othello defended his conduct by relating the false tales of Desdemona which he had heard from Iago, more particularly dwelling upon the incident of the embroidered handkerchief; but when Emilia heard this, her husband's treachery dawned upon her for the first time, and she declared stoutly that she her self had procured the handkerchief for Iago at his own command.

It was in vain that Iago endeavoured to prevent his wife from telling what she knew about this incident, and from proclaiming Desdemona's innocence, which was now plain to all; and finding that she would not be silenced, and that her accusing words had brought his villainy to light, he rushed upon her in fury, and stabbed her to the heart.

The Ambassador immediately ordered his arrest; and then, turning to Othello, who was now filled with agonising remorse and despair on learning that he had slain his beloved wife without cause, since

she had been innocent after all, he said:

"O thou Othello, that was once so good, What shall be said to thee?"

And Othello replied humbly and sorrowfully:

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well; Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought, Perplex'd in the extreme; of one, whose hand, Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away, Richer than all his tribe; of one, whose subdued eyes, Albeit unused to the melting mood, Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees Their medicinal gum: Set you down this: And say besides—that in Aleppo once, Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk Beat a Venetian and traduced the state, I took by the throat the circumcised dog, And smote him—thus!"

With these words the unhappy Moor seized his sword, and stabbed himself to the heart; then, as the attendants sprang forward in horror, he fell back dead beside the corpse of his beloved Desdemona.



WAGNER

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

(Der Fliegende Holländer)

THERE was once a Dutch sea-captain who was so brave and fearless that no amount of danger seemed to daunt him. Battling with the wild winds and waves was the greatest joy to him, and his light-hearted daring carried him through many a difficult

passage.

But at last the crowning test of his courage came; for, on a voyage round the coast of Africa, there arose the most furious tempest that had ever been known in those seas. All prudent seamen at once sought refuge in harbours and sheltering bays, casting their anchors until the storm should abate; but the Dutch captain only laughed at the fears of his crew when they implored him to do likewise, and, casting prudence to the winds, he swore that in spite of the raging hurricane he would double the Cape of Good Hope without delay, even if he kept on sailing for ever.

Now it happened that this foolish vow was over heard by the Evil One, who was in the very heart of the tempest, and, as a punishment for his vain boast, he condemned the rash captain to sail the seas until the Day of Judgment. The only hope of release held out to him was to find a pure and lovely maiden who would be willing to love him faithfully until death; and for this purpose he was allowed to go on shore once in every seven years to seek for such a

saviour.

Full of remorse and despair, the unhappy captain 397

began his ceaseless voyage, and the mad recklessness of his speed soon won for him the name of the "Flying Dutchman."

The fame of his terrible plight, and of the evil influence surrounding him, became world-wide, and all good sailors tried to avoid the doomed ship, crossing themselves devoutly whenever its blood-red sails

and black masts appeared in sight.

Once in every seven years the Flying Dutchman went on shore; but he always returned disappointed and despairing, for no maiden could be found willing to share his fate and to be loving and faithful to him until death. And so, for years and centuries, the illfated man sailed the seas unceasingly, and though he daily courted death, yet death came not to him, and every danger passed him by.

At length, after many hopeless centuries had gone by, the Flying Dutchman steered his ship towards the rugged coast of Norway; and as another seven years' term was just now at an end, he determined to go on shore and begin his hopeless quest once more.

By this time his vessel was laden with gold and jewels gathered from the sea and coasts of many lands; and by bestowing his treasures lavishly, he knew he would soon gain acquaintance with someone.

As he drew near to the shores of a lonely bay, he found a Norwegian vessel already there before him, having sought shelter from a passing storm, and presently he entered into conversation with the cap-

tain, and tried to make friends with him.

The Norwegian captain, whose name was Daland, welcomed the stranger very kindly; and he told him that he only waited in this dreary spot until the storm abated, when he should eagerly make for his home, a few miles further along the coast, where his fair daughter was watching for his return.

When the Flying Dutchman heard that the Norwegian had a daughter, he was very glad; and presently he eagerly offered to Daland the whole of his vast treasures, if he would give him in return a few

days' hospitality, and his daughter as a bride.

Now Daland, who was somewhat greedy of gold, had long desired to find such a wealthy husband for his beautiful daughter, and, though he knew nothing of the stranger before him, and felt somewhat afraid of his weird looks and mysterious crew, he could not resist the desire to possess the wonderful treasures described to him. So he gladly gave the Dutchman permission to woo the maiden; and a short time afterwards, the storm having passed away, the two ships set sail for Daland's home.

In the meanwhile, the household of the Norwegian captain had been eagerly awaiting his return for some time, and on the day of his expected arrival, his fair daughter, Senta, was spinning with her maidens in

the principal room of the house.

Dame Mary, the old nurse, was in charge of the work, and under her directions the pretty maidens were kept busily employed, singing merry songs to

the hum of their spinning-wheels.

Only one of the maidens was idle; and this was the beautiful young mistress—Senta herself—who sat with her hands folded, pensively gazing at a picture upon the wall. The picture was a portrait of the Flying Dutchman, who had been once seen by an artist years ago, and whose story told in ballad and legend was well known in Norway; and as Senta looked upon that pale, sad face, a great pity for the poor wanderer's terrible fate arose within her.

This face had such a wonderful fascination for the tender maiden, that a great love and devotion grew up in her heart for the tortured soul she longed to comfort; and on this day of her father's return, she gazed upon the picture with more intentness than usual, for she had dreamed many times of late that its subject stood before her as a real living lover.

But Dame Mary did not care to see her sweet young mistress gaze so frequently upon the face of one whom Satan had claimed for his own; and presently she called out sharply to her: "Thou careless girl!

Wilt thou not spin?"

Then the other maidens begged her also to join them in their spinning, and not to waste her sighs and thoughts on one who could never be her lover; but Senta said she was tired of the hum of spinningwheels, and asked Dame Mary to tell them again the legend of the Flying Dutchman.

But Dame Mary would not do so; and then Senta herself sang the whole ballad through from beginning

to end, in her sweet, soft voice.

She described the rash vow of the daring captain, and the awful doom it had brought upon him, and the song excited her to such passionate depths of pity that, at the end of it, she stretched out her arms and cried aloud, as though the spectral seaman himself stood before her:

"I am the one who through her love will save thee! Oh, may the Angels hither guide thee! Through me, may new-found joy betide thee!"

As she uttered these wild words, which caused Dame Mary and her maidens to cry out in horror, a handsome young huntsman, named Erik, entered the room, and heard all; and having loved the fair Senta from childhood, and believed himself beloved in return, he rushed to her side in alarm, imploring her not to forsake him.

He then announced that Daland's ship had just arrived, accompanied by another and unknown vessel; and when Dame Mary and the maidens had hastily departed to set food ready for their master's welcome, he turned again to Senta, and begged her to assure him once more of her love, and to help him to gain her father's consent to their marriage, knowing full well that Daland desired a wealthier suitor for his daughter than a poor huntsman.

The beautiful Senta only laughed at his doubts; and when he reproached her with gazing so constantly at the picture on the wall, she declared it was but pity that filled her heart for the subject of it.

But Erik was not satisfied, and he went on to describe a vision he had lately had, in which he had seen Senta give her hand to this very phantom captain, who embraced her rapturously, and led her to his vessel; and when Senta heard this, the glamour of her strange fascination came over her again, and she cried out wildly:

"He seeks for me, and I for him! For him will I risk life and himb!"

Erik rushed away, wringing his hands with grief, feeling now that Senta must be under some strange and evil spell; and at this moment Daland entered the room with his mysterious guest, whom as yet he did not know to be the Flying Dutchman. He held out his arms lovingly, expecting his daughter to rush forward and embrace him as she had always done before on his return from sea; but Senta, with wide-open, intense eyes, was gazing fixedly beyond him at the stranger in the doorway.

There, in the living flesh, she beheld the face that had fascinated all her maiden days; and, spellbound with astonishment, she turned to embrace her father, as in a trance, saying: "My father, say, who

is this stranger?"

Then Daland explained how he had met with the strange captain and taken pity on his loneliness; and he eagerly added:

"Wilt thou, my child, accord our guest a friendly welcome?

And wilt thou also let him share thy kindly heart?

Give him thy hand, for bridegroom it is thine to call him!

If thou but give consent, to-morrow his thou art. Look on these gems; look on the bracelets! To what he owns, trifles are these! Dost thou, my child, not long to have them? And all art thine, when thou art his!"

As he spoke, Daland, with the gleam of avarice in his eyes, spread out on a table the jewels and gold the Flying Dutchman had already given him from his treasure-laden ship; but seeing that Senta did not even glance at them, he thought it wiser to retire, and leave the stranger to plead his own cause.

When he had gone, the Flying Dutchman, with trembling hope, seized the hands of Senta and implored her to share his lonely fate, declaring that he had seen her in visions long ago, and believed her to be the one who should save him from his woes, and bring him peace and rest at last; and Senta, with rapture, consented to be his bride, telling him that she had also seen him in her dreams, and had longed to release him from his sorrows.

When the Flying Dutchman thus knew that Senta was acquainted with his sad story and willing to break the evil spell that had been cast upon him, he was transported with joy; and yet he nobly begged her to think of the sacrifice she was about to make by sharing his lot. To which the fair maiden replied

heroically:

"Him whom I choose, him I love only, And loving, e'en till death! Here is my hand! I will not rue! But e'en to death will I be true!"

At this moment Daland returned, and, full of joy at seeing that Senta was willing to accept the stranger he had chosen for her husband, he gladly joined their hands.

He then invited them to return with him to the shore; for it was always his custom, at the end of a voyage, to give a feast to the crew on board his ship.

When they arrived upon the shore, a gay scene was already taking place. Dame Mary and her merry maidens had brought food and wine on deck, and the jolly sailors were soon greeting their pretty sweethearts, and feasting, laughing, and singing with thankful hearts.

In strange contrast to this merriment, complete silence reigned on board the Flying Dutchman's ship, for though food and wine had also been brought out for the stranger's crew, they kept down below, and gave no sound of life at all. It was in vain that the maidens tried to attract their attention; and at length, alarmed at the strange looks of the silent vessel, they desisted altogether.

And then, when the Norwegian sailors, in their own enjoyment, had almost forgotten the presence of the strangers, the mysterious crew of the Flying Dutchman suddenly roused up and began to sing, in harsh, unearthly tones, a wild song, in which they told the story of their ill-fated master; and at the same time a dark, bluish flame gleamed around them,

and loud rumblings of a storm were heard.

At first the startled Norwegians looked on in wonder, and tried to drown these weird sounds with their own gay singing; but after a while they grew alarmed, and, overcome by the dreadful scene, and full of horror, they hurriedly crossed themselves and retired to the cabin. On seeing this, the crew of the phantom ship burst into a peal of shrill, demoniacal laughter; and then the ghastly flame died slowly away, the stormy rumblings ceased, and silence reigned once more.

The Norwegians now knew that the dreaded and shunned Flying Dutchman and his evil crew from the abodes of darkness were in their midst; and Erik the Huntsman, shocked and horrified, rushed towards Senta, and implored her to renounce the stranger whose evil fate she had agreed to share. He passionately pleaded his own faithful love, begging her to accept it once again; and he reminded her of the old sweet days when she had been contented to love

him, saying:

[&]quot;Hast thou forgot that day when thou didst call me, Call me to thee, you pleasant vale within? When, counting not what labour might befall me, Fearless I climbed, gay flow're for thee to win?

Bethink thee, how, upon the headland standing, Wo watched thy father from the shore depart, He, ere we mark'd his gleaming sail expanding, He bade thee trust my fond and faithful heart, Why thrill'd my soul to feel my hand clasp'd in thine? Say, was it not that it told me thou wert true?"

These tender, pleading words were heard by the Flying Dutchman, who was hovering near; and the wretched man, full of disappointment and despair, believing that Senta was about to renounce him, rushed on board his own ship and drew the anchor, crying out wildly: "Abandoned! All is for ever lost! Senta, farewell!"

But Senta, though torn by Erik's pleading, still found her love and devotion to the Flying Dutchman the strongest feeling in her heart; and, rushing for-

ward to follow him, she cried:

"Canst thou doubt if I am faithful?
Unhappy! What has blinded thee?
Oh stay! The vow we made forsake not!
What I have promised, kept shall be!"

Erik, Daland, and others seized the distraught maiden as she fled, full of horror at the sacrifice she was about to make for one whose evil doom affrighted them; and whilst they held her back, the Flying Dutchman, though utterly bereft of hope, nobly vowed that he would release her from her promise

to him, and sail away at once.

But Senta was determined to share the sad doom of the hero of her dreams, and by her faithful love to break the cruel spell that had bound him so long; and struggling until she freed herself from those who so vainly tried to hold her back, she ran forward to the edge of an overhanging cliff close by, stretching out her arms, and crying wildly to the hopeless figure on the departing vessel:

"Well do I know thee—Well do I know thy doom! I knew thy face when I beheld thee first! The end of thine affliction comes:

My love till death shall take thy curse away!

Here stand I, faithful, yea, till death!"

With these heroic words, the gentle, devoted maiden, in a transport of joy, cast herself into the sea; and, immediately afterwards, the phantom ship sank beneath the waves, which arose and receded again in a mighty whirlpool.

As the Norwegians gazed with awe and astonishment upon this wondrous sight, they saw, in the golden glow of the setting sun, two ethereal forms rising together from the sea over the wreck, and float-

ing upward towards the heavens.

They were Senta and the Flying Dutchman, their arms entwined in a loving embrace, and a look of perfect peace and everlasting joy upon their radiant,

upturned faces.

The ransom had been paid; and the Flying Dutchman was at rest for evermore, with the fair, sweet maiden who had loved him faithfully until death!

TANNHĀUSER

In the fair land of Thuringia there once dwelt a handsome and noble knight, named Henry of Tannhäuser, who was famed for his wonderful gift of

song.

In a country where music was the delight of high and low, and where minstrelsy and knighthood went hand in hand, Tannhäuser was the sweetest minstrel of all; and when contests of song were held, it was he who most frequently carried off the wreath of victory. Nor were his brother-minstrels jealous of his power, for they loved him dearly, and gladly yielded him the palm.

The Landgrave, or ruling Prince of Thuringia, had a beautiful niece, the young Princess Elisabeth, whose gracious custom it was to bestow the prizes won at the Tournaments of Song; and, surrounded by her Court of fair maidens, she would listen with

delight to the joyous strains of the minstrels.

But when Tannhäuser sounded his harp with the soft and tender touch that was his gift, and the notes of his sweet, wonderful voice rang forth, the heart of the royal maiden was thrilled through and through, and she grew to love the Minstrel Knight with her whole being. And Henry of Tannhäuser trembled when her fair hands placed the wreath upon his brow; for he also loved, and Elisabeth of Thuringia was the queen of his heart.

But, strange to say, so far from being made happy by his love, Tannhäuser gradually became very wretched indeed, for he grew discontented and weary of his life. Whether it was that he fancied Elisabeth did not return his love, and that the royal maid would not be permitted to wed a humble knight; or whether an evil spirit tempted him, none can say. But day by day he grew more and more restless and heavy of heart—the joys, duties, and interests of earth no longer satisfying him—and he longed for a life of everlasting pleasure and delight, free from

pain and trouble.

Now, in Thuringia, there was a mountain called the Hörselberg, or Hill of Venus, within which the heathen goddess of Love and Beauty dwelt with her Court, holding everlasting revels, and seeking to destroy the souls of erring men who fell into her toils; and in this evil, though enticing place, Tannhäuser (either despairing or woefully tempted) at last sought refuge from the griefs and disappointments of earth.

He vanished so suddenly and entirely that none knew whither he had gone; and though his friends and companions sought him long and lovingly, they could not find him.

And the Princess Elisabeth was so full of grief at his loss that she hid herself away in her own chamber to weep in secret; and though the minstrel knights still continued to hold their contests, she no longer graced the fêtes with her presence, but refused to give away the awards.

In the meantime, Tannhäuser was living a life of

In the meantime, Tannhäuser was living a life of soft ease and voluptuous delight in the enthralling Court of Venus; and the beautiful goddess hoped that her loveliness and tender caresses were satisfying the wild longings of the handsome minstrel, whose soul

she wished to destroy.

And for a time, indeed, the young man felt that he had at last found the peace and happiness he vainly sought; and the constant indulgence of his senses deadened his conscience, and made him forget that duty, labour, striving, and suffering are the only true means by which a man can attain to his highest

Thus, a year passed swiftly by in this abode of monotonous joys and delights, where no count was kept of days and seasons; and then, at last, a passing return of his better nature came over Tannhäuser, and he awoke, as if from a trance, to the knowledge that a life of selfish pleasure cannot satisfy the longings of a noble nature.

He was kneeling, at the time, beside the fair goddess, as she reclined on a couch within the glittering cave where she held her Court; and on every side were the sights and sounds that had enthralled him so long. A wide shining lake stretched out into the distance, and in its rippling blue waters graceful Naiads were disporting themselves, whilst Sirens of wondrous beauty reclined on the mossy banks, their sweet, silvery voices filling the air with enticing songs.

Tender lovers, wrapped in ecstasy, were reclining here and there; and in the centre of the cave a number of dainty Nymphs were constantly dancing, joined ever and anon by a train of wild Bacchantes, who brought a whirl of tumult into their movements, exciting all to a perfect frenzy of joy.

The sounds of music never ceased for a moment: first low and tender, thrilling the heart, and then so merry and joyous that none could refrain from dancing. And over the whole dazzling scene a pall of soft, rosy light was spread, gathering into a mist of billowy clouds in the distance.

Fairest of the fair, and Queen of all this Love and Beauty, Venus sat, enthroned for ever; and as Tannhäuser knelt at the feet of the goddess, with his head sunk upon her knee, he felt for the moment that the

world was indeed well lost.

Then, suddenly, with this passing thought of the earth he had left, the Minstrel Knight awakened from his dream of bliss, and seemed to hear the silvery chime of bells from the world outside, bringing back to his remembrance the thought of fair things now lost to him: the radiant sunshine of day, the starry

splendour of night, the renewing life and sweet verdure of spring, the nightingale's song of hope and promise, the delight of joy after sorrow, of light

after darkness, that only mortals know.

In a flash he saw what an evil choice he had made, how cloying were the selfish delights that now held him captive; and weary of such monotonous joys, he longed to be in the world once more with its mingled joys and pains, understanding now that to strive with evil and conquer was a true heart's highest aim.

The deceptive veil of glamour was thus torn from his eyes; and full of remorse for the time he had already wasted, he implored the beautiful goddess for freedom to return to earth.

But Venus was angry when she heard his request, reproaching him with ingratitude, since she had found him despairing, and brought him comfort; and she begged him to touch his harp once more, and love her still, that all her delights might be his for ever.

Tannhäuser declared he would evermore sing her praises; but now determined to be set free from her enslaving toils, he again begged her to send him back into the world, saying:

"Twas joy alone, a longing thirst for pleasure,
That fill'd my heart, and darkened my desire:
And thou, whose bounty gods alone can measure,
Gav'st me, poor mortal, all its wealth to know.
But while my sense thou hast enchanted,
By thy great love my heart is daunted:
A god alone can dwell in joy,
To mortals frail, its blisses cloy.
I would be swayed by pain and pleasure
In Nature's sweet, alternate measure:
I must away from thee, or die!"

Once more Venus poured forth her anger upon him, declaring that he slighted her love since the charms he vaunted so soon wearied him; but the Minstrel Knight replied:

"While I have life, alone my harp shall praise thee, No meaner theme shall e'er my song inspire: And yet, for earth, for earth I'm yearning! 'Tis freedom I must win, or die. For freedom I can all defy,
To strife or glory forth I go,
Come life or death, come joy or woe.
No more in bondage will I sigh!
Oh queen, beloved goddess, let me fly!"

Then, when Venus saw that the cloying delights she had to offer could no longer hold the awakened soul of Tannhäuser, she at last granted his request, and angrily bade him go back to the cold dull earth once more, declaring that he would but meet with scorn and disappointment, and be glad to return to her sweet joys again. But the Minstrel Knight said that he could never return to her, since repentance and his hope of Heaven would now fill all his days; and with these words he bade an everlasting farewell to the lovely enchantress.

And then the dazzling Court of Venus suddenly vanished from eight; and when Tannhäuser next opened his eyes, he found himself in a beautiful valley, between the forest-girt Hörselberg and the

royal castle.

Overhead, the radiant sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky, and on the mountain side a flock of sheep were feeding, whilst from a rocky eminence above, a joyous young shepherd piped a merry lay. The fresh green grass was spangled with early flowers, and the birds were singing in the budding trees; for it was spring-time, and all the world seemed full of praise and joy.

Overcome with gratitude, Tannhäuser sank upon his knees to return thanks to Heaven for his release from selfish pleasure; and humbly he resolved to lead

a new life of repentance and devotion.

Whitimhe thus knelt in prayer, a band of pilgrims

on their way to Rome came by, and wound along the mountain path, singing a hymn of confession and repentance; and when they had gone, Tannhäuser repeated the hymn upon his knees.

A short time afterwards, it happened that the Landgrave of Thuringia and his minstrel knights passed through the valley on their return from a great foresthunt; and seeing the kneeling Knight, they drew near to learn who he was, and whence he came.

But when Tannhäuser rose and faced them on their approach, they recognised him at once as their long-lost brother-minstrel, whom they had sought so vainly; and receiving him joyfully, they eagerly demanded of him where he had hidden himself so long, begging him to return with them to the castle.

Tannhäuser replied that he had wandered far into strange and distant realms in search of peace and rest, which he had not found; and he declared he could not rejoin their beloved ranks, since he had resolved

to lead the lonely pilgrim's life of devotion.

Then a noble young knight, named Wolfram, who had been his dearest friend in the old days, stepped forward, and said that the fair Princess Elisabeth still mourned the absence of the favourite minstrel, whose sweet music had filled her heart with love and rapture; and he added:

"When thou in scorn hadst left us,
Her heart was closed to joy and song.
Of her sweet presence she bereft us,
For thee in vain she wearied long.
Oh, Minstrel bold, return and rest thee,
Once more awake thy joyous strain,
Cast off the burden that oppress'd thee,
And her fair star will shine again!"

The name of Elisabeth acted like a charm upon Tannhäuser, for love of this sweet royal maid still filled his whole heart, strengthened and deepened by the struggles he had gone through; and learning thus for certain that his love was returned, he flung aside all thoughts of a pilgrim's life, and cried out

gladly: "What joy! What joy! Oh, guide my

steps to her!"

The whole valley was by this time full of nobles and squires in hunting green; and when the Landgrave sounded his bugle, he was answered by a joyous peal from the merry huntsmen as they gathered round.

Then the brilliant cavalcade rode gaily forward with Tannhäuser in their midst, and when they reached the castle, high revels were held in honour of the Minstrel Knight's return. The chief of these revels was a grand Tournament of Song; and it was announced that the prize of the victor was to be the hand of the Princess Elisabeth, who, having learnt with joy of the return of Tannhäuser, had gladly agreed to be present, and to offer her hand as the reward, knowing full well who would gain it.

When the day of the contest arrived, the Landgrave, minstrels, and the whole Court assembled in the famous Hall of Song within the royal castle; and as the Princess Elisabeth entered with her train of fair maidens, she was received amongst them with

great joy.

But Elisabeth had eyes for none other but Tannhäuser, who dropped on his knees before her; and raising him gently from the ground, she told him of the woe she had suffered during his absence, and of

the joy she now felt at his return.

When Tannhäuser heard these gracious words, and knew that he might now win the hand of his dear Princess, he was full of happiness; and he told her that it was his great love that had always made his music so sweet in the old days.

And now the Landgrave announced that the theme of the contest was to be Nature and Praise of Love; and one by one the minstrel knights stepped forward

to sing their songs.

The noble young Wolfram began the contest, and as he vainly loved the Princess Elisabeth with his whole heart, he addressed his song to her as a humble worshipper, whose only desire was to adore her from

afar, and live and die in her service.

The other minstrels described the nature of their love in a similar strain; and then Tannhäuser sprang forward, and passionately disputed all that they had said. Having loved profanely himself, and being full of impatience at what he called their cold and timid hearts, he outraged the whole company by describing to them the voluptuous ideas of love he had gained from his sojourn in the Court of Venus; and led away by his exaltation, he addressed himself to the fair goddess herself, declaring that none but those who had enjoyed the enchantments of her embraces were worthy to speak of Love.

When his wild and beautiful song came to an end, a loud chorus of dismay and indignation arose from the company, and the minstrel knights, full of horror because one of their number had been in the Court of the heathen goddess, rushed upon Tannhäuser with drawn swords, uttering curses, and declaring that the gates of Heaven were now closed on him for

ever.

But quick the beautiful Elisabeth sprang in front of her lover; and, though utterly crushed with disappointment at his unworthiness, she bade the knights stand back and refrain their curses and reproaches, since repentance was still left to the poor sinner.

The Landgrave now pronounced sentence of banishment upon Tannhäuser, but since Elisabeth had interceded for him, he declared hers to be the voice of Heaven, and held out one ray of hope. He commanded him to join the band of holy pilgrims now passing through the land on their way to the sacred shrine at Rome, and there, repentant and humble, to seek forgiveness from the Pope, not daring to return unless by him forgiven.

Elisabeth again besought her lover to repent, and set his thoughts alone on Heaven; and Tannhäuser, full of despair, seeing now that an illusion had blinded him, rushed off to join the ranks of the pilgrims,

humbly praying as he went.

When the pilgrims had left the country, Elisabeth gave herself up entirely to heavenly thoughts and devotions, and every day went to kneel before a shrine at the foot of the mountain to pray that Heaven's forgiveness might come upon her lover, and that he might be restored to her.

Slowly and sadly the months went by; and at last the day came on which the pilgrims were expected to

pass by on their return from Rome.

Early in the morning Elisabeth went to the Virgin's shrine in the valley to pray; and the faithful Wolfram, who loved her still in vain, kept watch on the path above, and nobly prayed Heaven to send the lovers a happy meeting.

At length a holy chant was heard in the distance, and soon afterwards the band of pilgrims came trooping down the mountain path and passed along the valley, singing joyous songs of thankfulness because their repentance had been accepted and their sins forgiven.

Wolfram and Elisabeth eagerly scanned the passing pilgrims with anxious eyes; but Tannhäuser was not

amongst them.

Full of grief and disappointment, the royal maiden now resolved to leave the outside world, with its troubles and pains, and seek peace in the pure, calm life of a nun; and kneeling once more before the shrine, she solemnly consecrated herself to the Virgin in these beautiful words:

"Oh, blessed Virgin, hear my prayer!
Thou star of glory, look on me!
Here in the dust I bend before thee,
Now from this earth, oh set me free!
Let me, a maiden pure and white,
Enter into thy kingdom bright!
In this hour, oh grant thy aid!
Till thy eternal peace thou give me.
I vow to live and die thy maid,
And on thy bounty I will call,
That heavenly grace on him may fall."

Then Elisabeth arose in peace and returned to the Castle; but her heart was broken, and a few hours later she died in the arms of her weeping maidens.

When evening fell, Wolfram, sad at heart, stood alone on the mountain-side; and still thinking of his lost love, his voice presently broke forth into a low, sweet song.

"Oh star of eve, thy tender beam Smiles on my spirit's troubled dream. From heart that ne'er its trust betrayed, Greet, when she passes, the peerless maid! Bear her beyond this vale of sorrow To fields of light that know no morrow."

The sound of the Minstrel's singing caused a crouching figure on the mountain path to draw nearer; and in this grief-stricken form, clad in a pilgrim's robe, Wolfram recognised the wretched Tannhäuser.

Still scorning his friend for having, as he supposed, deserted the pilgrims' ranks and never made the journey to Rome, Wolfram drew back; but when Tannhäuser assured him that he had indeed visited the sacred shrine, and returned uncomforted, he was filled with pity instead, and willingly listened to his sad tale.

Then Tannhäuser told him that, full of the humblest repentance, he had made the journey to Rome, gladly enduring more hardships and sufferings than any of the other pilgrims.

"When I beheld a heavy burdened pilgrim,
It seemed to me his load was all too light.
And if he sought a pathway o'er the meadow,
I trod, unshod, amid the rock and thorns.
If he refreshed his lips by cooling fountains,
The brazen sun poured on my head forlorn,
When he besought the saints in murmur'd prayer,
I shed my life-blood in the cause divine;
When in the hospice he sought rest and shelter,
On ice and snow it was that I sought mine!"

Amidst such hardships as these the poor pilgrim had at length reached Rome, and humbly kneeling before the sacred shrine, had begged the Pope to grant

him Heaven's forgiveness.

But when the Pope had listened to his confession he said the sin was too great for pardon, and declared that it was as impossible for one who had dwelt in the evil Courts of Venus to hope for Heaven's forgiveness as it was for the rood in his hand to put

forth green leaves.

And then, scorned by one and all, with his sin still unabsolved, and the hand of Elisabeth farther away from him than ever, the wretched Tannhäuser had followed in the wake of the homeward-bound pilgrims: and now, having finished his story, and being full of despair, he called wildly upon the goddess Venus to receive him into her dazzling Courts of Love once more.

In answer to his call, the sounds of enchanting music were distinctly heard in the distance, and in a thick, billowy mist that began to encircle the Hörselberg, the lovely form of Venus became dimly visible; but Wolfram implored the despairing Knight to refrain from again sharing these evil joys that would ruin his soul, and still to think only of repentance for his sin.

But Tannhäuser was hopeless, and felt that, scorned by the world, and denied to Heaven, the Court of Venus was the only haven left to him; and though he loathed the thought of its cloying pleasures, he was just about to yield to the enticing calls of the fair goddess, when another incident occurred.

At this moment, the solemn funeral procession of Elisabeth came slowly by, and passed along the mountain path, with mourning knights and weeping maidens singing a low requiem hymn; and at the same time, a fresh band of pilgrims appeared on the heights above and announced that a miracle had taken place on the night of Tannhäuser's departure

from Rome. The Pope's rood had put forth fresh green leaves by morning light; and taking this as a sign of Heaven's favour, he had sent messengers into every part to proclaim that Tannhäuser's sin was

forgiven, and his repentance accepted.

Full of thankfulness that the prayers of Elisabeth, now an angel in Heaven, had been thus answered, Wolfram joined the pilgrims in their rejoicings for the forgiven sinner, whilst Venus disappeared within her mountain once more; but Tannhäuser, overcome with joy, and filled with a wonderful peace, sank dying beside the bier of his beloved one, and the golden gates of Heaven were opened to him at last.

LOHENGRIN

During the early years of the tenth century, Henry the Fowler, King of Germany, gained great renown in all the countries of Europe, and by means of his courage and skill in warfare, had brought many fair cities and large tracts of land beneath his sway.

Amongst these countries was Brabant, over which he ruled as Liege Lord; and coming one day to Antwerp, the chief city of this fair land, to gather his faithful vassals together to help him to fight against the wild Hungarians, who had invaded his realms, he found them in a troubled state, since they were without a ruler, and their chiefs were quarrelling amongst each other.

Some years ago, the brave Duke of Brabant had died and left his two children in the charge of his nearest kinsman, Count Frederick of Telramund, who promised to love and guard them until they were old enough to rule the Dukedom for themselves. The boy, Gottfried, and his sister, Elsa, loved one another so dearly that they could not bear to be parted; but, happy though they were in each other's love, a great trouble fell upon them.

As the years went on, Frederick of Telramund came under the evil influence of a princess of another powerful family of Brabant, rivals for the throne with the late Duke. This Princess, whose name was Ortrud, was very unscrupulous, and a dealer in magic; and she had learnt the arts of sorcery so well that it was her delight to change people into the forms of animals, and to work all the mischief she could. She hated Elsa, whe had now grown up to

be a sweet and beautiful maiden; and, determined to bring trouble upon her, she persuaded Telramund, with cunning words, that she herself was the rightful ruler of Brabant, and that if he would marry her they would rule the country together.

Now, Telramund wished to marry Elsa, whose hand had been promised him by her father; but the pure and lovely Elsa only felt scorn for him, knowing him to be neither good nor worthy of her love. Then Ortrud laid a wicked plot, by means of which she

hoped to gain her ends.

One day, when Elsa and Gottfried had gone into the forest to walk and talk together according to their usual custom, Ortrud, by her spells, caused them to wander apart from each other; and then, by further magic, she transformed Gottfried into a bird. Elsa wandered about for some time, searching for her brother, but at last returned to the palace, sad and alone. Then the wicked Ortrud came forward and declared that she had seen Elsa drown her brother in the moat of a ruined castle in the forest: and she soon persuaded Telramund that the maiden had indeed murdered the young Gottfried. So Telramund renounced the hand of Elsa, and married Ortrud instead; and very soon afterwards he claimed the throne of Brabant.

The poor Princess Elsa was now very unhappy, full of grief for the loss of the brother she had loved so well, and in fear for her own safety; but one day she was comforted by a vivid and beautiful dream as she was praying to Heaven for help. In her dream she saw a splendid Knight clad in silver armour, who looked upon her with eyes of love, and spoke such cheering words of hope that she no longer felt alone and helpless. When she awoke, she spoke of the noble Champion whom she now believed would come to protect her; but Telramund and Ortrud laughed with scorn, and declared this mysterious lover was but the partner in her evil deed, with whom she

wished to share the throne.

It was just at this time that Henry the Fowler, Liege Lord of Brabant, came to Antwerp to call for aid from his vassals; and hearing of the strife that was going on, he gathered the nobles together on the banks of the river Scheldt, and declared he would give judgment in the matter that very day.

When all the people were assembled on the riverside, Frederick of Telramund came forward and accused the Princess Elsa of having murdered her brother in order to win the throne for herself; and then the King called upon Elsa to defend the charge

made against her.

When the royal maiden appeared with her ladies, pale and sad, she looked so fair and pure that all the people felt her to be innocent; and as they gazed upon her, almost with awe, she presently stood forth and sang a beautiful song, describing the noble Knight she had seen in her dream, whom she felt would be her Champion. These were the words she sang:

"I saw in splendour shining, a Knight of glorious mien, On me his eyes inclining with tranquil gaze serene; A horn of gold around him, he leant upon his sword, Thus when I erst espied him 'mid clouds of light he soared,

His words so low and tender brought life renewed to me; My guardian, my defender, thou shalt my Champion be!"

When the song came to an end, the King was so struck with Elsa's angelic look that he declared so evil a deed could never have been done by one whom

Heaven seemed to protect.

On hearing this, Telramund grew angry, and announcing that he had spoken the truth, he challenged any man who doubted his word to fight with him. The King now determined that Elsa's innocence or guilt should thus be proved by single combat, and calling upon her to name a champion who should fight for her, he said that Heaven alone should decide between them. If her Champion gained the victory,

she should be declared innocent, but if Count Telramund overcame, they would know that she was guilty.

Elsa agreed to this, and said that her Champion should be the noble Knight of her dream; and then the King's herald blew a long, loud blast upon his trumpet, and cried out: "Who will do battle for Elsa of Brabant?"

There was a long, breathless pause, but no one answered the call. Again the herald called out: "Who will do battle for Elsa of Brabant?" Then Elsa stretched out her arms and prayed Heaven to send her the Champion she sought; and this time

the call was answered.

A great shout arose from the people, and all eyes were turned towards the river; for there they saw, drawn by a beautiful white swan, a skiff approaching, in which stood a splendid Knight of glorious mien. He was clad entirely in dazzling silver armour, with a shining helmet upon his head, a golden horn at his side, and a flashing sword girt around his waist; and the beauty of his face and form, and the truth and purity that shone in his eyes, were so wondrous that everyone gazed upon him with speechless wonder.

When the skiff drew near to the shore, the Knight sprang lightly to the bank; but facing the river once again, he uttered a few words of thanks and farewell to the swan that had brought him thither:

"I give thee thanks, my faithful swan! Turn thee again and breast the tide, Return unto that land of dawn Where joyous we did long abide. Well thy appointed task is done; Farewell, my trusty swan!"

The swan then sailed away with the skiff in a stately manner, and when it had vanished out of sight, the Knight turned towards the amazed company on the shore.

As Elsa saw him approaching towards her she was

filled with joy, for she knew him at once to be the radiant Knight of her dream, and when he declared that he had come to fight for her cause, she rapturously accepted him as her Champion, promising her hand as his reward should he gain the victory. The Knight of the Swan next begged of her to promise that she would never ask him to tell her his race and name, or whence he came, and Elsa already loved him so dearly that she gladly gave this promise.

Then the stranger drew his sword, and the fight

Then the stranger drew his sword, and the fight began; and after a sharp conflict he felled Telramund to the ground, but generously spared his life. Ortrud shrieked with rage and dismay, but the rest of the

company uttered loud shouts of joy.

The King now declared that since Heaven had given the victory to Elsa's Champion, the royal maiden's innocence was proved; and he commanded the people of Brabant to obey Elsa and her Knight as their rulers.

So Telramund and Ortrud were stripped of all their power, honours, and riches; and disgraced, poor, and wretched, they were driven from the palace, to

wander in the streets as outcasts.

They could not, however, keep away from the scenes of their former splendour; and on the night before Elsa's marriage with the Knight of the Swan, they came, clad in their coarse garments, and crouched outside the walls of the palace. The sounds of revelry that came from within made them feel more wretched still, and Telramund began to reproach Ortrud bitterly for the trouble she had brought on them both by her wicked spells and false words.

But Ortrud answered: "List to me, and we may yet overcome Elsa and her Champion, and win back our power! Yonder Knight of the Swan bids the maiden never to ask his name and home. And why? Because if he becomes known he must return whence he came. Let us then put doubt in Elsa's heart by telling her he gained this victory by sorcery, and thus entice her to drag from him his secret. He is

certainly helped by sorcery, and I have learnt by my own arts that if but one drop of blood be spilt of him to whom magic help is lent, all his powers will vanish. Do thou, then, seek to wound this Knight, and if I can also entice Elsa to ask his name and race, all shall yet be well with us."

Frederick of Telramund eagerly agreed to Ortrud's evil plans; and whilst they were thus talking together, Elsa herself, clad in flowing white garments, appeared on the balcony above, singing a glad song of thankfulness for the joy that was in her heart. Whilst she sang, Telramund crept quietly away, and when the sweet song came to an end, Ortrud came forth from her hiding-place, and called out: "Elsa!"

The royal maiden, who had thought herself quite alone, was surprised at hearing her name thus spoken; and when she recognised Ortrud in the square below, she was filled with pity at seeing her in such a sad plight. So when the wily Ortrud next began to relate a false story, declaring that she and her husband were under an evil spell when they accused her of having murdered her brother, and that they were now full of remorse and misery, Elsa's kind heart was touched; and presently she came down into the square and took Ortrud back into the palace with her, promising that next morning she would intercede for the two outcasts with her Champion Knight.

On the morrow, all in the palace were full of excitement and rejoicing, for this was Elsa's wedding day, and great preparations had been made to celebrate it in fitting style. Elsa was delighted at the prospect of happiness before her, but doubt of her brave Champion was already springing up in her heart, planted there by Ortrud. A fear that she would lose her lover began to fill her with dread, for her cunning enemy did not fail to point out that one to whom magic aid was lent might at any moment

vanish from her sight.

When the bridal procession to the Minster was formed, Ortrud, elad once more in gorgeous gar-

ments, was amongst the train of ladies; but as they drew near to the church, her haughty spirit could no longer bear that Elsa should go before her, and angrily she commanded the bride to stand back, declaring that she herself should lead, since she was the rightful ruler of Brabant. Elsa stopped, full of surprise as she remembered how humble Ortrud had been the night before; and the angry sorceress now challenged her to name her Champion Knight, and to say from whence he obtained his mystic power and strength.

In the midst of this confusion, the King and his lords appeared on the scene with the bridegroom; and when the Knight of the Swan saw Elsa in conversation with the wicked Ortrud, he begged her not to be led to doubt him. As he spoke to her, Frederick of Telramund sprang out from a hiding-place close at hand, and, before all the bridal party, accused Elsa's Champion of having gained the victory over him by sorcery and evil spells, and called upon him to declare his name and place of abode if he would be regarded as a true knight.

But the Knight of the Swan still refused to tell his secret, declaring that Elsa alone could compel him to speak; and he added that the King and princes must be satisfied with having seen his deed of valour, and how Heaven had shown favour to him. The King and nobles now declared they were satisfied for him to remain unknown, and that they would always honour and stand by him for the deed he had done.

Having failed with this shaft, Telramund crept round to Elsa, and whispered to her the suggestion that she should allow him to wound her lover slightly, since, if but one drop of his blood could be spilled, he would lose his strange power and remain for ever at her side; and he added that that very night he would be near at hand to do the deed. But the Knight of the Swan came and drew Elsa quickly away, begging her to have no further doubt of him; and Elsa, gladly placing her hand in his, entered the Minster with him, and the bridal procession followed.

When the wedding ceremony was over, great revels were held in the palace; and ere these came to an end, Elsa and her husband were led to their bridal chamber by a splendid company of knights and ladies, who sang to them the following sweet marriage song:

"Faithful and true we lead ye forth, Where love triumphant shall crown ye with joy! Star of renown, flow'r of the earth, Blest be ye both, far from all life's annoy. Champion victorious, go thou before! Mirth's noisy revel ye have forsaken, Tender delights for you now awaken! Fragrant abode enshrine ye in bliss, Splendour and state in joy ye dismiss, Faithful and true, we lead ye forth!"

When at last they were left alone, the Knight of the Swan clasped his beautiful wife in his arms, and the two rejoiced together in their happy love. But joyous though she was, the seeds of doubt and fear in Elsa's heart, planted there by Ortrud, were growing fast; and when these first blissful moments were past, she begged her husband to reveal to her his secret, declaring that she would guard it well.

The Knight of the Swan begged her not to ask him, since all their happiness must thus come to an end, and he would be obliged to leave her; but Elsa declared that he was bound by a magic spell, and entreated him to tell her his secret, since she could not trust in him nor be sure that he would remain at

her side.

Sorrowfully her husband again implored her not to question him; but Elsa, now torn with the fear of losing her beloved one, cried out wildly:

"What magic can I borrow
To bind thy heart to me?
A spell is cast around thee,
By magic thou art here;
In vain thou wouldst assure me.
Declare thy race and name!"

At this moment, Telramund, with four of his companions, broke into the room with drawn swords, intending to kill, or, at least, to wound the stranger Knight; but Elsa, quick to see the danger, handed her husband his sword, and with one blow of it, he felled Telramund to the ground, dead.

The noise of the scuffle soon brought the lords and ladies of the Court into the chamber, and the Knight of the Swan put the fainting Elsa into the charge of her maidens, declaring sadly that all their joy must now come to an end, for since she had demanded to be told his name and home, he must tell her, and his secret once known, he was compelled to depart.

So, as soon as daylight came, and the sun rose in the sky, the King, with Elsa and her husband and the nobles of Brabant, gathered together once more on the banks of the Scheldt. The nobles first of all gave their promise to Henry the Fowler to fight for him as faithful vassals against the Hungarians; and then the Knight of the Swan stepped forward to make himself known to them, declaring that since Elsa had asked to know his secret, he could no longer keep it from her.

He announced that he was a knight of the Holy Grail, and that so long as he remained unknown, he had wonderful powers of strength and might, and could overcome all evil; but once he became known to man he was compelled to depart and return to the Grail that sent him, for its Champion Knight must be guarded from all doubtings. He thus described the sacred relic which he and other pure and stainless knights served so faithfully:

[&]quot;In distant land, by ways remote and hidden,
There stands a burg that men call Montsalvat;
It holds a shrine, to the profane forbidden:
More precious there is nought on earth than that:
And thron'd in light it holds a Cup immortal,
That whose sees from earthly sin is cleansed;
"Twas borne by angels thre' the Heav'nly portal—
Its coming hath a holy reign commenced.

Once ev'ry year a dove from Heaven descendeth, To strengthen it anew for works of grace; 'Tis called the Grail! . . ."

As the people remained lost in astonishment at this wondrous tale, the Knight of the Swan added:

"Now mark, craft or disguise my soul disdaineth,
The Grail sent me to right you lady's name;
My father, Percival, gloriously reigneth,
His Knight am I, and Lohengrin my name!"

As he spoke these words, a cry arose from the people: "The swan! The swan! Behold it comes!"

All eyes were turned towards the river; and there, in the distance, the skiff in which the Champion Knight had arrived was seen once more approaching, drawn by the beautiful swan. All this time Elsa had sat silent, pale and sad; but now she sprang up with a cry of grief, and clung to her husband with tears and entreaties.

But Lohengrin gently unwound her clinging arms, and sadly said:

"Too long I stay—I must obey the Grail!
Oh, Elsa, think what joys thy doubts have ended!
Couldst thou not trust in me for one short year?
Then thy dear brother, whom the Grail defended,
In life and honour thou hadst welcom'd here.
If he returns, when our sweet ties are broken,
This horn, this sword, and ring give him in token;
This horn succour on battle-field shall send him,
And with this sword he'll conquer ev'ry foe;
This ring shall mind him who did most befriend him—
Of me who saved thee from the depths of woe!"

He then embraced her tenderly, and bade her a gentle farewell. But as he moved towards the riverbank, Ortrud pressed forward and declared that the swan was in reality young Gottfried, the heir of Brabant, whom she had thus transformed by her magic; and she added triumphantly to Elsa that if she could have kept her Champion Knight by her

side for one year, her brother would have been

restored again.

But Lohengrin heard these words, though they were not intended to reach him, and sinking on his knees, he prayed for power to overcome Ortrud's magic. His prayer was graciously answered; for as the people gazed in wonder, the fair white Dove of the Holy Grail flew softly down and hovered over the skiff, whilst Lohengrin quickly loosened the golden chain that bound the swan. Instantly, the swan sank into the water, and presently there arose in its place the young prince, Gottfried, Elsa's brother.

Lohengrin led the fair youth forward, declaring him to be the rightful ruler of Brabant; and then, as the nobles were receiving Gottfried with surprise and delight, the stranger Knight stepped lightly into the skiff, and the white Dove, seizing the chain.

began to draw it along.

Elsa, who had clasped Gottfried in her arms with great joy, now turned towards the river, and seeing Lohengrin standing up in the departing skiff signing a last sad farewell to her, she uttered a cry of grief and despair, and sank senseless to the ground.

Gottfried knelt in dismay beside her; and at that moment the Champion Knight of the Holy Grail

vanished out of sight.

TRISTAN AND ISOLDA

In the glorious days of chivalry, when King Arthur and his knights were gaining honour and renown by their noble deeds, a stately barque might have been seen one golden noontide swiftly approaching the shores of Cornwall. Tristan, a valiant Cornish knight, far-famed for his prowess and untarnished honour, was bringing the beautiful Princess Isolda of Ireland as a bride for his uncle, King Mark, who held his Court at Tyntagel, in Cornwall; and as they drew near to their native shores, the ruddy sailors broke forth into a glad song of greeting, rejoicing at the safe conclusion of their honourable mission.

But there was no joy in the heart of Tristan, who stood at the helm, silent and full of gloom. For he, himself, loved this fair Princess of Ireland; but a dark blood-feud between them had forced him to stifle his own passion, and to secure her as a bride

for another.

And a tumult was also raging in the heart of the proud Isolda, for she resented the alliance that had been made for her, and was filled with anger against the knight who came as ambassador to bear her away. For they had met before, these two, and a dread secret lay between them.

For many years there had been war between Ireland and Cornwall, and at last the King of Ireland had felt himself powerful enough to claim tribute

from King Mark.

Morold, the cousin and lover of Isolda, was sent to levy the tax; but he met with a sorry reception. For Tristan, the nephew and brayest knight of King Mark, indignantly resented the claim, and challenged Morold to mortal combat on the shore; and, to his joy, he defeated and slew the Irish knight, whose head was sent back as the only tribute the subjects of King Mark would pay to Ireland.

But Tristan, himself, had also been grievously wounded by his adversary; and after searching in vain for a healer for his hurts, he crawled into a small boat and set it adrift in his feverish despair. The wind and waves bore the frail craft far out from the coast, and at last the wounded knight found him-

self cast upon the shores of Ireland.

Here he was hospitably received by the Irish King and his beautiful daughter, to whom he gave his name as Tantris; and the Princess Isolda, being greatly skilled in leech-craft, and famous for her knowledge of balsams and simples, set herself the task of healing the stranger's wounds. His noble appearance and pitiful plight soon won her heart, and Tristan, loving the fair princess directly he beheld her, was quick to vow fealty to her.

But one day, as Isolda sat watching beside the couch of her charge, she noticed in the sick man's discarded sword a curiously-shaped notch, which exactly fitted a splinter of steel that had been found imbedded in the skull of Morold, whose head had lately arrived from Cornwall as a ghastly token of

defeat and defiance.

Knowing now that it was the world-renowned Tristan, the bold defier and enemy of Ireland, the slayer of her cousin and former lover, Morold, who lay before her, and whom she had nursed so tenderly, Isolda was filled with scorn and anger; and seizing the tell-tale sword in her hand, she rushed furiously forward, intending to plunge it in his heart. But Tristan's eyes met hers in such a pleading, helpless glance that the angry princess was quickly filled with pity, and felt she could not harm him as he lay thus in feebleness; and letting the sword drop gently to

the ground, she crushed her revengeful feelings, and continued her nursing of the sick man. Yet Tristan did not dare to speak of love to her again, feeling that Isolda would now regard his slaying of Morold as a blood-feud and barrier between them; and as soon as his wounds were sufficiently healed, he returned to Cornwall.

Soon after this, peace was declared between the two countries; and as the crowning pledge of the truce, King Mark was persuaded by his knights to ask the hand of the Princess Isolda in marriage. Tristan joined heartily in pressing forward this plan; for, believing that Isolda was now lost to him, he felt that he could reward her best for her kindness to

him by making her Queen of Cornwall.

But King Mark was growing old, and, being childless, had decided to make Tristan his heir: and it was not until his beloved nephew himself added his entreaties to the desires of the courtiers that he at length gave consent. Then, when peace and friendship had been sworn by both nations, and the King of Ireland had willingly agreed to bestow his daughter upon King Mark as the pledge of their truce, Tristan was despatched in a gilded barge to conduct the lovely bride to her new home.

Isolda submitted to her father's will with due filial obedience and reverence; but her heart was filled with scorn and hot anger against the brave knight she had nursed back to life and health. As she now reclined in her curtained recess within the stately vessel that bore her so swiftly away from her native land, she declared passionately to her attendant handmaid, Brangæna, that she had been betrayed by Tristan; for after vowing fealty to her in Ireland, he had but returned to demand her in marriage for his kinsman. Brangæna, alarmed at this outburst, attempted to sooth her mistress's angry feelings by assuring her that Sir Tristan had doubtless meant to show his gratitude by making her Queen of Cornwall; and she added that King Mark, though advancing in years,

was good and noble in disposition, and worthy of

admiration and regard.

But Isolda gazed impatiently beyond the curtains at the silent, motionless figure of Tristan, wondering sadly how she could support a loveless life so near that glorious knight, who now seemed so indifferent to her; for Tristan, struggling to repress the love in his heart, had kept sternly aloof from his fair charge throughout the voyage, fearing to trust himself in her presence. This seeming unkindness and studied coldness enraged the proud and unhappy princess to such a pitch that she determined they should die together before landing in Cornwall; and she sent Brangæna to the helm to command Tristan's immediate presence in her recess.

At first Tristan refused to leave the helm, remembering his duty and loyalty to his royal uncle; but when, just as they were approaching the shore, Isolda sent another message, imperiously declaring that she would not land in Cornwall unless he sought her pardon first, the trembling knight was forced

to yield to her request.

Isolda meanwhile opened her casket of drugs and simples, saying she desired a potion that would cure her of all her woes; and selecting a phial containing a deadly poison, she bade Brangæna pour it out into

a golden cup.

But Brangæna was horror-struck; and, determined to save her beloved mistress from the consequences of so rash a resolve, she poured away the poison, unseen by Isolda, and filled the golden cup instead with a love-philtre that the Queen of Ireland, skilled in sorcery, had placed in the casket for her daughter to drink with her husband on her wedding-night.

When Tristan appeared within the recess, Isolda began to pour forth bitter words of reproach upon him, declaring that though she had preserved his life when he lay in feebleness before her, she had still sworn vengeance upon him; and then, offering him the golden cup, she bade him drink its contents with

her as a final truce to all their strife. The ship was by this time at the landing-stage, where King Mark already stood with his lords, waiting to receive the lovely bride; and, full of despair, Tristan took the

proffered cup and began to drink.

When he had swallowed half the draught, Isolda snatched the goblet from his trembling hand; and drank the remainder; and then the two stood and gazed into each other's eyes in wonder and bewilderment. For the strange potion was coursing wildly through their veins like a fiery stream, changing all their dull despair into the glow of passion, and filling their hearts with uncontrollable love and desire for each other; and at last, utterly powerless to fight against the ecstasy within them, they fell into each other's arms, overcome by a rapture they could not quell.

Brangæna, terror-stricken at the dire result of her fond deed, implored the lovers to recollect their duty and the scene that was going on around them, for all their lords and attendants were now waiting for Tristan to conduct his royal charge to King Mark.

But the pair seemed wrapped in a sweet dream from which the joyous cries of greeting gradually awakened them; and then, when they realised what had happened, they were filled with despair, and Isolda sank back half-fainting into Tristan's outstretched arms.

But Brangæna, eager to prevent the immediate discovery of their hapless love, quickly roused her mistress, and hung upon her shoulders the gorgeous royal mantle that had been provided for her nuptials; and then Tristan, as in a trance, with woe in his heart, led his beloved one forth from the ship, and delivered her into the hands of his Sovereign.

Isolda and King Mark were immediately wedded, amidst great rejoicings; but although the unhappy victims of the fatal love-potion had strength to loyally fulfil this pledge of peace between the two countries, they could not long keep their devouring passion

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within bounds. With the help of the devoted and remorseful Brangæna, they frequently met in secret, and the rapture of these stolen interviews was as balm to their bleeding hearts, the one sweet chain

that kept them still bound to life.

But Tristan had an enemy, a knight named Melot, who, under the disguise of friendship, had gained his confidence and learnt the secret of his hopeless passion, and who, having no real love for the man he called his friend, determined to use this woeful secret for his own base ends. For Melot was jealous of the renown and noble qualities of Tristan, and longed to supplant him in the regard of his royal master; and having now discovered a weapon to his hand in the secret confided to him by the unsuspecting knight, he eagerly sought an opportunity for betraying him, and quickly found one.

Having persuaded the King to arrange a royal hunt one beautiful summer night, the crafty Melot easily induced Tristan to remain behind, and so secure a long, sweet interview with his beloved Isolda; but the false friend gaily joined in the chase, intending to return in a short time with the King to entrap the

lovers.

When the hunting party had departed into the depths of the forest, and the merry sounds of the horns could only be heard in the far distance, Isolda crept forth from the silent castle, followed by her faithful handmaid; and bidding Brangæna keep watch near the forest, she flung a lighted torch to the ground, this being the signal for Tristan's approach. She then ran down the steps towards a moon-lit avenue, and in another moment the lovers were clasped in each other's arms.

It was a moment of intense joy; and as the enraptured pair reclined together upon a mossy bank studded with sleeping flowers, they poured out to each other, in tenderest phrases, the passionate love they were compelled to keep pent within their hearts before the eyes of the world. It was midnight; but

the happy lovers cared naught for time, and would gladly have remained in such sweet converse for ever.

But suddenly there was a cry from Brangæna, who rushed wildly forward, declaring that they were betrayed; and next moment, King Mark and a few of his lords broke hastily into the avenue, having been led to the spot by Melot, who had found an oppor-tunity during the hunt to inform his royal master of the lovers' intended meeting.

At first King Mark had refused to believe that his noblest and best-beloved knight could thus betray his honour; but as he stepped into the avenue, and the living proof of it met his gaze, he was filled with deepest grief, and began to pour forth bitter reproaches upon the wretched Tristan, who vainly endeavoured to hide Isolda's shrinking form from the scornful gaze of the courtiers.

Stung by the just reproaches of the King, and enraged at the cruel treachery of his false friend, Tristan drew his sword and challenged Melot to fight; and in his despair, caring little to defend himself, he allowed his adversary to overcome him, and soon fell

to the ground mortally wounded.

Isolda was borne back fainting to the castle, followed by King Mark and his courtiers; and Tristan was carried, in a dying condition, on board a vessel by his faithful henchman, Kurvenal, who quickly set sail for Brittany, where his master owned a castle

overlooking the sea.

Here the sick man was at length placed in safety by Kurvenal, who endeavoured to restore him to health; but finding that his beloved master's wounds were too serious for him to heal, and that he grew worse instead of better, the poor henchman was in despair. At last he bethought him to send for Isolda herself, whom he knew to be greatly skilled in leechcraft; and thinking only of his master's physical needs, he despatched a messenger in a swift vessel, to entreat the beautiful Queen to come and heal her almost dying lover.

For several days after, Tristan remained in an unconscious state; but upon being brought out into an open courtyard one sunny noontide, he awoke from his torpor, and feebly asked for Isolda. Kurvenal answered that he had sent for her to come with healing balsams for his wounds; and, running to the walls, he exclaimed joyfully that the vessel was even

now returning with Isolda on board.

Tristan was overjoyed at this glad news, and when Kurvenal presently went to receive the welcome guest at the castle gates, the wounded man's excitement knew no bounds. In his eagerness to see his beloved one once again, he endeavoured to crawl from the couch; but the effort of moving caused his terrible wounds to open afresh, and just as Isolda rushed through the gateway, he uttered her name with a gasping cry of joy, and fell back dead upon the couch.

Isolda, with a loud shriek of woe, fell fainting upon his prostrate body, and at that moment Kurvenal was hailed by a second vessel that had immediately followed in the wake of the first. On this barque were King Mark with his knights, and also Brangæna; and quickly surmising that they were come with hostile intentions, the brave henchman barricaded the entrance to the castle, and refused admittance to the

newcomers, who had instantly landed.

Then when the eager knights, by their superior force, broke through the gateway, Kurvenal sprang furiously upon them and fought desperately, in spite of their cries that they came in peace. The first to enter was the traitor, Melot, and with a cry of triumph, Kurvenal thrust him through the heart. Then receiving a mortal wound himself, the faithful henchman crawled to the couch of the dead Tristan, and feeling for his beloved master's hand, he sank, dying, at his feet.

King Mark and his party now rushed forward, unhindered; and Brangæna, raising her still breathing mistress in her arms, besought her to revive, since she had come with good news for her. For upon the flight of Isolda to the aid of Tristan, Brangæna had, in desperation, sought King Mark, and told him of how, quite unconsciously, Tristan and Isolda had swallowed the magic potion that had made them lovers for life; and, rejoicing to learn that his bestloved knight and beautiful Queen were thus free from blame, since they were powerless to fight against the mighty philtre, the noble-hearted King was filled with pity for the sufferings they had endured. He resolved generously to renounce Isolda, and permit the unhappy lovers to be united; and immediately entering his ship, he had followed with Brangæna and his knights in the wake of the flying Queen.

But the vessel had arrived too late, for Tristan was already dead; and full of grief, King Mark knelt, weeping, at the foot of the couch. And it was in vain that Brangæna tried to raise the quivering form of her beloved mistress; for Isolda's heart was broken, and with a last despairing cry, she fell back lifeless to

the ground.

Thus had the magic philtre wrought destruction; and in death only were the lovers united.

THE MASTERSINGERS OF NUREMBERG

(Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg)

AFTER the decay of the knightly court poetry of the Minnesingers, whose pure and noble art had been inspired and encouraged by the age of chivalry in which they lived, the spontaneous love of song, natural to the character of the German people, was lost for a time in the gloom and ignorance of the dark Middle Ages; but, later on, when the Reformation had once more lighted the way to knowledge and culture, the beautiful art was revived by guilds of musical enthusiasts, known as The Mastersingers.

But the dramatic, chivalric conception of life, which had been the prevailing spirit of the Minnesingers of old, all of whom had been of noble birth and exercised their art in the courts of kings, never quite returned; for the Mastersingers, being but humble burghers and artisans, could not attain to such courtly grace of expression, and their art was naturally of a stiffer and more pedantic character. Yet they did excellent work, establishing schools and guilds of poetry and song in most of the principal towns of Germany; but by hedging themselves in by narrow rules and conventions, they left little margin for the soaring spirit of true genius, which ever chafes at petty restraints, and insists on freedom of fancy.

In Nuremberg, the Mastersingers attained to the greatest excellence of their class; and in the middle of the sixteenth century there flourished in this community, the simple-minded, large-hearted Hans

Sachs, the truest poet of his time, whose broad views were in refreshing contrast to the dull and cramped conceptions of art held by most of the Mastersingers.

It was during the time when Hans Sachs was a leader amongst the celebrated Mastersingers of Nuremberg, that this story opens; and upon St. John's Eve in a certain year, he and his musical friends were called upon to undergo a new and exciting experience in the pursuit of their beloved art.

Veit Pogner, a goldsmith, and the wealthiest of the older Mastersingers, impelled by an enthusiastic love of art, had just offered the hand of his beautiful daughter, Eva, together with the inheritance of all his riches and worldly possessions, as a prize to the master musician who should gain the wreath of victory in the grand contest to be held on St. John's

Day, in accordance with the usual custom.

Amongst the competing masters who felt most confident of success was Sixtus Beckmesser, the town clerk, who occupied the important office of marker in the society, an officer whose duty it was to mark on a slate the faults made against the established rules and regulations of the Guild. Beckmesser, though without talent, and no longer young, nor even possessed of any pleasing personal charms, was so conceited that he fancied none to be his equal in music and poetry; and in spite of the fact that Eva was to have power to refuse the prizewinner, should he prove distasteful to her, he yet felt assured of success, though the maiden had never shown signs of favour to him.

As a matter of fact, Eva had already fixed her affections upon a young knight, one Sir Walter von Stolzing, who, being descended from the old Minnesingers, whose glorious achievements he had read of and studied, and in whom the truly poetic, romantic, and knightly art was revived, had left his now decaying ancestral hall, in order to find kindred spirits amongst the celebrated Mastersingers of music-loving Nuremberg; and having once been brought

into contact with the soaring, enthusiastic spirit of this noble youth, she could never again be contented with the pedantic methods of the burgher Master-

singers.

Walter, having business relations with old Pogner in connection with his poverty-stricken estate, had thus made acquaintance with the goldsmith's fair daughter; and the exquisite soul-inspiring beauty and pure, sweet nature of this maiden having quickly kindled a consuming passion in his impetuous, romantic heart, and knowing that his love was returned, he determined to enter the ranks of the competitors on St. John's Day, since none but a Mastersinger could aspire to her hand, and trusted that his great love would enable his song to gain the victor's wreath.

For this reason, he repaired on St. John's Eve to the Church of St. Katherine, where the Mastersingers held their meetings, and requested to be admitted to the competition. He was greatly disconcerted on being informed by a lively young man named David, who was apprenticed to Hans Sachs the cobbler, that the musical guild was arranged as a trades' guild, with degrees of membership, such apprentices, scholars, and singers, and that it was usual to spend at least a year in each degree before attaining to the rank of a "master"; and he was filled with impatience on hearing of the many petty rules and narrow restrictions in verse and songmaking which were necessary to be observed ere he could hope to please the Mastersingers, who had absolute faith in their own standard of perfection, and refused to admit into their ranks any who failed to conform to the same, seven faults only against the rules being allowed to candidates for admission to their competitions.

Nevertheless, still believing in his own natural gifts, which he had cultivated in the beautiful woodlands of his birthplace, untrammelled by forms and conventions, when the Mastersingers had assembled.

he requested permission to prove to them that he was a master of poetic song, and therefore justified in entering the competition on the morrow; and, since he was introduced to them by Pogner himself, who vouched for his good faith, he was invited to sing a song, though the Guild members were horrified on hearing that he had never studied in any Mastersinging guild, and had received no other instruction than that afforded by a love of Nature, and a natural poetic instinct fanned into being by reading accounts of the romantic Minnesingers of old.

Beckmesser, the marker, having pompously ensconced himself in his accustomed curtained recess, with slate and chalk to mark down the faults of the candidate, announced that he was ready to hear the young knight's trial; and Walter immediately burst forth into an enthusiastic song in praise of springtime and maidenhood, so full of true poetry and music that it held the masters spell-bound, in spite of the fact that it completely outraged all their pet

rules in every direction.

But the conceited Beckmesser was full of indignation that one so unheedful of the forms and conventions of his own infallible guild should dare to aspire to enter the ranks of the Mastersingers; and before the song was half finished, he burst noisily from behind his curtain, and contemptuously announced that the candidate had already failed many times over, since his slate was scored at least fifty times with faults against the rules, the singer having had no regard at all for the special construction of verse and musical form which he and his friends alone considered to be correct.

The Mastersingers all agreed with the marker's condemnation, with the exception of Hans Sachs, who knew that Beckmesser's verdict was chiefly caused by jealousy; and he himself being the only true poet-musician in the Mastersingers' Guild, alone was able to appreciate Walter's beautiful song,

and, seeing that the young knight had a real and lofty genius far beyond anything that his burgher friends could boast of, boldly stood up in his defence, declaring to the outraged company that the stranger's music was of a higher order than their own and consequently not to be judged by their standards, which might not be infallible after all.

But the Mastersingers were not to be convinced, even though their favourite Hans Sachs spoke in favour of the audacious stranger; and so Walter was declared "outsung" and in no way fit to be admitted

into the ranks of the Mastersingers.

The young knight, repelled by the Mastersingers' narrow art, from which he had hoped to derive such pleasure, was filled with disappointment and despair; but, finding that he could not hope to gain the hand of his beloved Eva as a Mastersinger, he determined to make an attempt to elope with her that evening.

Eva, being anxious to learn how her lover had fared at his trial, sent her attendant, Magdalena, to get the news from her sweetheart, David, the apprentice of Hans Sachs; and then, upon returning at dusk from a walk with her father, she remained outside the house, to hear what her handmaid had to say. The two girls talked in low tones, for they saw that Hans Sachs (whose shop stood exactly opposite the house of the goldsmith) was still at work; for honest Hans, suspecting the young knight's intention with regard to Eva, had determined to frustrate his plans, in kindness to the imprudent pair, since he loved them both.

Eva was in despair when told by Magdalena of her lover's failure; but, seeing Walter at that moment approaching, she sent her maid within doors, and awaited him with a joy she could not conceal.

The lovers embraced rapturously; and Eva, enthralled by Walter's love for her, readily agreed to his passionate pleading that they should fly together that night. Ere they could make their escape, however, they heard approaching steps; and, hastily con-

cealing themselves behind some bushes, they were forced to wait until the intruder should depart.

The newcomer was none other than Beckmesser, the conceited marker, who, having composed a song to sing at the contest on the morrow, had come now to sing it as a serenade beneath the window of the fair Eva, hoping that the maiden would be thus so favourably impressed by his composition, that she would speak in his favour when he was adjudged the winner, as he so fondly expected to be; and, stationing himself beneath his charmer's chamber window, he commenced his song, which was in reality a very poor one, consisting of inferior poetry and worse melody.

Hans Sachs, hoping now to deter Sir Walter and Eva from their rash act by keeping them in their hiding-place, at once began to sing himself in a very loud voice, to a rollicking tune and merry words; an unexpected performance which was naturally very

disconcerting to the serenader.

In a furious rage at this wanton drowning of his sentimental song, with which he had intended to win the heart of Eva, Beckmesser many times shouted to the cobbler to hold his peace; but, finding that Hans refused to listen to his request he resorted to strategy in order to enable his fair mistress to hear his song undisturbed. Approaching the cobbler's shop, he invited Hans to listen to his song, and criticise it, that he might correct any faults there might be in the composition ere performing it on the morrow; and this the cobbler agreed to do, saying that for every fault he detected, he would hammer a nail into the pair of shoes he was at that moment mending for the town clerk, who had been blaming him earlier in the day for being behindhand with his work.

So Beckmesser began his song again, full of delight at observing a maiden's figure appear at the chamber window, imagining this to be his adored one, though it was in reality the waiting-maid, Magdalena, who was anxiously awaiting the return of her young mistress; but his rage was soon increased tenfold, for his halting verses were so full of faulty accents and unmusical discords, that the cobbler's hammer fell with a thud almost constantly. Ere the song was half over, Hans ran out of his shop, and, holding up the finished shoes in triumph, cried mischievously in imitation of the marker's own manner at the young knight's examination, "Haven't you done yet? Because I've finished the shoes already, thanks to the many faults you have made!"

As Beckmesser furiously endeavoured to scream out the last verses of his song, the apprentice David, disturbed by this unmusical squalling, opened his chamber-window; and, seeing his sweetheart, Magdalena, in the chamber opposite, and thinking the serenade addressed to her, he was seized with jealousy, and, rushing out into the street, set upon the bold serenader and began to cudgel him with right good

will.

Taken thus by surprise, Beckmesser began to cry out for aid, for David was a lusty youth, and was quickly beating him black and blue; and, aroused by the sounds of the scuffle, the neighbours came pouring from the houses on every side, and not understanding the reason for the commotion, but stumbling in the dark against each other, they began to quarrel amongst themselves, and a general scrimmage quickly ensued, in which the mischievous apprentice friends of David gladly took part, enjoying the riot as a great joke.

Thinking that in the midst of this scuffle they might make their escape, Sir Walter tenderly endeavoured to lead Eva round the edge of the crowd; but Hans Sachs, who had kept his eyes constantly on the pair, soon frustrated this pretty plan by seizing Walter's arm in his own iron grasp, and at the same time pushing Eva up the steps of her father's house, where she was quickly seized and taken within by Pogner himself, who, having opened his door to

inquire the cause of the scrimmage, was amazed to

find his daughter in the midst of the crowd.

Having seen that the half-fainting Eva was safely in her father's care, Hans Sachs, having first caught David and unceremoniously kicked him into his shop, followed himself, dragging the despairing Walter with him; and upon the sound of the night-watchman's horn being heard, the crowd melted away as quickly as it had gathered, so that by the time the sleepy guardian of the peace appeared, the street was deserted and still once more.

Next morning, as Hans, attired in gala dress, ready for the great Festival of St. John's Day, sat in his workshop, the young knight entered from the chamber where he had been resting, and announced to his kind friend that he had just awakened from a beautiful and vivid dream, which he longed to put into song; and the honest, art-loving cobbler entreated him to sing it to him straightway, whilst still fresh in his mind, in the form of a master-song of the correct form, of which he gave him some few hints, declaring that with such a Heaven-sent subject, sung in the richly-flowing stream of melody that was his own priceless gift, he would certainly yet win the maiden he loved so well.

Encouraged thus by the large-hearted Hans, and inspired by his dream, Walter broke forth into a gloriously beautiful song, perfect alike in poetic form and wondrous melody, which the cobbler eagerly wrote down as he sang; and when the song came to an end, Hans, overcome with emotion and joy, hastily pushed the singer back to his chamber, bidding him put on gala raiment, and declaring himself confident of his success in the contest.

Whilst the knight was thus engaged, Beckmesser entered the shop, so stiff from his cudgelling of the night before that he could scarcely walk, and, intending to continue his quarrel with the cobbler; but, seeing the MS. of the song lying on the table, and imagining this to have been composed by Hans, his

mood quickly changed, and he asked to be allowed to sing this in the competition, instead of the one he had himself written, since the latter, he added conceitedly, had now without doubt lost the charm it possessed in the ears of his adored mistress, who, having once heard it under such adverse conditions,

would probably never care to hear it again.

Hans, knowing well enough that the unmusical town clerk would never be able to enter into the beauty of Walter's love-inspired words, said that he might have the song, bidding him, however, to sing it to a suitable melody; and Beckmesser, more confident than ever of his success, hurried away, full of delight at having thus secured, as he supposed, a song by Hans Sachs, who was acknowledged to be

the finest poet amongst the Mastersingers.

A little later in the day, crowds of merry holiday-makers assembled in the large, open meadow on the outskirts of Nuremberg, to hear the great Competition of Song, which had been so eagerly looked forward to by all; and when Eva, the fair prize-maiden, looking more beautiful than ever in her dazzling white robe, and attended by a number of pretty maids-of-honour, had taken her seat upon the daïs which had been set for her, the enthralling business of the day began.

Amidst a sudden hush of expectancy, Hans Sachs rose to announce once again to the people the generous and soul-inspiring prize offered by the art-loving Pogner, to be awarded to the Master Musician whose song should be unanimously declared the most worthy of praise; and when the loud applause which greeted this speech had died away, Beckmesser was called

upon to commence his song.

Nervously unrolling the MS. he had all the morning been vainly endeavouring to commit to memory, Beckmesser moved forward, and began his song, singing it to an altogether unsuitable, discordant, and unmusical tune; and in a frantic effort to remember the sense of what he was singing. he mixed up the

words in the most hopeless manner, and, plunging deeper into the mire of confusion as he proceeded, he succeeded in completely losing himself, and converted the poem into an astonishing pot-pourri of ludicrous

and meaningless balderdash.

At first, the people listened in amazement, thinking that the infallible marker, usually such a stickler for the correct rules of Mastersinging, had suddenly taken leave of his senses; and then, unable to restrain their merriment any longer, they all burst forth into a loud peal of derisive laughter, which completely

drowned the ridiculous singer.

In a furious rage of disappointment and wounded vanity, Beckmesser flung the MS. at the feet of Hans Sachs, declaring to the people that the cobbler had schemed thus to disgrace him by foisting his own bad song upon him; but in spite of his defence, as he rushed away in a storm of vexation, he was followed by the jeers of the crowd, with whom he was by no means popular, and who had not desired that one so pompous and elderly should gain so fair a prize.

When Beckmesser had disappeared, Hans Sachs picked up the despised poem, and declared to the people that the song was a good one, but could only be properly sung by the person who had composed it, whose name was not Hans Sachs; and then he called on Sir Walter von Stolzing, as the composer of the song, who would, by singing it to them, quickly prove that he was worthy to be regarded as the very

Mastersinger of Mastersingers.

A hum of admiration swept over the assembled company as the young knight stepped forward, for here, indeed, was one whose graceful form, glowing eyes, and poetry-inspired brow recalled the resplendent Minnesingers of old; and with hearts that throbbed with excitement, they listened to the rich joyous flood of melody that now filled the summer air.

Yes, Hans Sachs was right, and the song was a

noble one, and this was a Heaven-sent singer who laid a magic touch upon their very hearts, and filled them with a rapture almost too intense to be borne; and even the critical Mastersingers who had cavilled at his heedless disregard of their various rules the evening before, were now held spellbound with wonder

that song could be so glorious a thing.

As the song came to an end, a deafening burst of applause broke from the assemblage, who, with one accord, declared the young knight to be the winner in the contest; and as the beautiful Eva bent forward to place, with hands that trembled with joy, the wreath of victory upon the brow of the man she loved, a second burst of applause broke forth, for the two were well-matched, and made a fair picture as they stood together.

The Mastersingers now eagerly invited Walter to join their guild as one of themselves, an honour which, however, the young knight proudly refused, since his free spirit could not be curbed within so

small a range.

On hearing this, Hans Sachs humorously reproved him for speaking disparagingly of an art which had bestowed so rare a prize upon him; and then he launched forth staunchly into a speech in praise of the honest German art he loved so well, a speech which was received with the wildest enthusiasm by all, for Hans Sachs was the darling of the people of Nuremburg.

Thus the Contest of Song came to an end; and the young knight who had set out so hopefully in search of Art, had found as well a fair bride, whose love should henceforth be the magic golden key that should unlock for him the gates of Fame, Honour,

and Glory.

THE NIBELUNGS' RING

(Der Ring der Nibelungen)

PART I

THE RHINEGOLD

(Das Rheingold)

In the rocky depths of the wild Rhine river three lovely water-nymphs—Flosshildr, Woglinda, and Wellgunda—were merrily swimming hither and thither one dusky twilight; for though it was their duty to guard a certain mighty treasure, they found their task a light one, since no one had ever sought to rob them of it.

This evening, however, a visitor came to them at last; and suddenly the Rhine nymphs ceased their gambols in great surprise, on beholding a stranger in their midst. From a deep cleft in the rocks below a hideous black gnome had appeared; for Alberic the Nibelung, being of an adventurous spirit, had wandered upwards from Nibelheim, the underground abode of the gnomes, eager for fresh exploits.

As he now gazed upon the lovely Rhine nymphs, he was suddenly filled with a longing desire to possess one of them as a bride, and uttering a friendly greeting, he endeavoured to ingratiate himself with them. The water-maidens, however, scorned his advances, laughing at his ugly appearance; and when, incited by the fierce desire within him, he vainly tried to seize first one and then another in his grasp, they

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swam away merrily, leading him on with teasing taunts from rock to rock, until he was quite exhausted.

Presently, on approaching a central rock, upon which the nymphs had ensconced themselves, he was astonished to behold a wondrous gleam of gold issuing from its peak, and delighted at this dazzling radiance, he asked what it was. The maidens replied that the marvellous glow he saw came from the precious treasure they had been set to guard, the Rhinegold, which could only be torn from the rock by one who had forsworn for ever all the delights of love, and who might then shape from it a magic Ring that would gain him mighty power in the world.

On hearing this, Alberic, who had always longed for power, determined to gain the treasure; and loudly declaring that he renounced love and its delights for ever, he climbed the rock, and by a mighty effort wrenched the magic gold from its summit. The Rhine nymphs, now powerless to protect their treasure, dived back into the water with cries of despair, whilst Alberic triumphantly returned to Nibelheim with his prize.

Soon after this incident, the chief of the gods, Wotan, the All-Father, entered into an agreement with two powerful giants, Fasolt and Fafnir, to build him a noble castle in Asgard, the abode of the gods; and in payment for this service, he promised to bestow upon them Freia, the goddess of Youth and

Beauty.

Awakening one dawning day upon a flowery mountain-side, where he had been slumbering beside his celestial spouse, Fricka, the goddess of Marriage, he saw the glittering turrets of a glorious mansion upon a distant rocky height, and knew that the task was done; and arousing Fricka, he proudly pointed out to her their new abode, to which he gave the name of Valhalla.

Just then, however the beautiful Freia fled to them

for protection; and closely pursuing came the two giants, demanding her as the payment agreed upon

for the task they had just completed.

But Wotan now refused to give up the beloved Freia, and when the giants, furious at his refusal, again demanded their rights, he turned eagerly for help to Loki, the god of Fire and Deceit, at whose mischievous instigation he had entered into the compact. Loki had promised the great god to assist him in preventing the giants from obtaining the reward agreed upon for their labours, and he now cunningly related the story of how the Rhine nymphs had lost their magic gold to Alberic the gnome, hoping to excite the giants' interest in a treasure that could secure the holder such mighty power.

His ruse succeeded; for the two giants now declared that they would accept Alberic's treasure in lieu of the Goddess Freia; and they desired Wotan to

set forth, and rob the gnome at once.

Wotan, however, was furious at being asked to turn thief, and angrily refused to do their bidding; and upon this, Fasolt and Fafnir suddenly seized Freia, and ran off with her, declaring that they would hold her in pledge until the Rhine Gold treasure was delivered to them.

And now, a dreadful misfortune befell the dwellers in Asgard; for Freia was the guardian of a magic apple-tree, the fruit of which, eaten daily, alone preserved their youth and immortality. Deprived of the beautiful guardian's care, the apples began to fade and die, and the gods, consequently, quickly found themselves growing old and withered, and their radiant strength departing.

Full of horror, Wotan was now forced to secure the return of Freia at the price named by the giants; and, accompanied by Loki, he descended through a

rocky cleft to Nibelheim.

Here they made their way to the cave of Alberic, whose brother, Mime, they found crouching beside his blacksmith's forge, smarting from recent blows.

For by this time Alberic had shaped from the Rhine Gold a magic Ring of marvellous power, and by means of it had made himself the ruler of Nibelheim, forcing the unhappy gnomes to slave day and night, amassing treasure-hoards for him. He had also compelled his brother, Mime, the most skilful smith in that land of forges, to make him a Tarnhelm, or wishing cap, by means of which he could render himself invisible, or take on the form of any creature he chose.

Having learnt this from Mime, who was even now smarting from the blows of his tyrant-brother, the two gods laid their plans; and when Alberic presently appeared, they greeted him in friendly tones, and invited him to show them the wonderful powers of his Tarnhelm.

The gnome, proud of his new treasure, at once put on his wishing-cap, and changed himself into a dragon; and then, at the request of the cunning Loki, he unsuspectingly took on the form of a toad. However, no sooner did the toad appear, than the gods instantly seized it, and binding their captive securely, they triumphantly bore him off to Wotan's mountainside.

Here Alberic, though he had quickly regained his own shape, found himself a prisoner indeed, his precious Tarnhelm having been put out of his reach; and the exultant gods refused to set him free until he had agreed to yield up all his mighty treasures. So the wretched dwarf, in order to gain his freedom, was compelled to call upon his gnome-subjects to bring forth the precious hoards they had laid up for him, and to pile them in a heap upon the mountain-side.

When the Tarnhelm had been added to the glittering heap of gold and gems, Alberic entreated to be allowed to retain the magic Ring, and upon the request being refused, he passionately laid a curse upon the circlet, declaring that it should bring disaster and death upon every person who should afterwards own it. But in spite of the curse, the Ring was snatched

from his finger by Wotan, and then, on being set free, the hapless gnome, robbed of his power, fled back to his own land, vanishing through a cleft in the rock.

A concourse of gods and goddesses had now arrived upon the scene; and presently the giants, Fasolt and Fafnir, also arrived to claim their wages, bringing their hostage with them. At first Wotan also endeavoured to retain the Ring for himself; but the gods refused to yield Freia until they possessed this wonderful talisman as well as the other treasures. Then Erda, the wise goddess of Earth, rose slowly from the ground, and warned the great god that disaster was in store for him the longer he held the now fatal talisman; and at last, overcome by this warning, Wotan tore the Ring from his finger, and flung it upon the treasure-heap.

The giants now took possession of their prize; and upon Freia being set at liberty, all the gods at once

regained their pristine youth and strength.

But Alberic's curse had not been a vain one, and no sooner did the giants obtain their treasure than they began to quarrel as to which should have the Ring; and in the fight that quickly ensued, Fasolt was killed. Fafnir, the survivor, then secured the mighty hoard, together with the Ring and Tarnhelm, and retired to a certain gloomy cave in a wild, deserted spot; and here, in the form of a huge, fiery dragon, he

guarded the prize he had won.

Wotan, over-awed at this immediate proof of the terrible power of Alberic's curse, began to wonder how he could preserve himself and all the gods descended from him; for he, also, had owned the fatal Ring for a time, and, god though he was, his powers were limited. Even when Fricka reminded him that the dazzling abode, Valhalla, was still left to him as a Castle of Refuge, he was little comforted, knowing that it had been obtained at a shameful price that would at length bring about the destruction of the gods, since he, their All-Father, could not escape the

curse laid upon him; but he agreed to take possession of the castle.

Since the glittering mansion was separated from them by the great yawning valley of the Rhine, Donner, the god of Thunder, came forward to their aid; and first clearing the cloud-laden, misty air by means of a thunderstorm, he set up a dazzling rainbow-bridge from one mountain top to the other.

It completely spanned the valley; and upon this beautiful arch of radiant light, the gods passed over to take possession of the glorious halls of Valhalla.

PART II

THE VALKYRIE

(Die Walküre)

ONE wild and stormy evening, a noble warrior-hero, named Siegmund, flying weaponless and shieldless through a dark forest, sought refuge from his pursuing enemies in the first lonely homestead he came to, and opening the door with eager haste, un-

ceremoniously stepped within.

He found himself in a strange-looking room; for the house was built around a mighty ash-tree, the huge trunk of which stood as a pillar in the centre. Finding that the room was empty, Siegmund strode forward to the hearth, and being utterly exhausted by his late exertions and flight, he stretched himself upon a bear-skin before the fire, and sank into a sweet, refreshing slumber.

Soon afterwards, there came forth from an inner chamber a beautiful but sad-looking maiden—Sieglinde, the mistress of this curious dwelling-place—and full of surprise at seeing a stranger lying upon the

hearth, she called to him in a low tone.

The sound of the maiden's sweet voice aroused Siegmund; and raising his head, he asked for a drink. Sieglinde quickly filled a drinking-horn with water, and handed it to the warrior, who drank thirstily; and then, as Siegmund gazed upon the fair beauty of his benefactress, a thrill of delight passed through him, and he asked who it was who thus restored him to life.

Sieglinde, through whose veins an answering thrill had also sped, replied that she was the wife of Hunding, a warrior, in whose house he had found shelter; and to show that he was welcome there, she fetched him a horn of foaming mead, and begged him to drink again. When Siegmund returned the horn, their eyes met in a long, passionate gaze; for love had suddenly entered their hearts, and both felt that

their fates would be for ever intertwined.

As they talked together there was a quick step outside, and next moment Hunding, the warrior, entered the room. He was of a fierce, stern, and gloomy countenance; and as his eyes fell upon the stranger standing beside his hearth, a dark scowl swept over his brow. Sieglinde explained in a trembling voice that the stranger had sought shelter in their house, and that she had given him refreshment; and then, extending a somewhat tardy welcome to his guest, Hunding doffed his weapons and bade his wife

spread supper for them.

When the three were seated at the table, Hunding curtly demanded his guest's name and history; and Siggmund replied sadly that he was known to the world as "Woful," owing to his misfortunes, and that he and a beloved twin-sister had been born to a famous hero. One evening, when Woful was still but a child, on returning from a forest hunt with his father, a terrible sight had met their eyes; for their home had been burnt and laid waste by enemies, the beautiful mother lay dead, and no trace whatever remained of the tender little maid who had been the sunshine of their lives. Some years later, the warlike hero also suddenly disappeared, and then his unhappy son was left to struggle as best he could with the ill-luck that had followed him all his life. That evening, on passing through the forest, he had rushed to the aid of a poor maiden, whose kinsmen were seeking to wed her to a churl whom she abhorred; but being overwhelmed and disarmed by the fierce tyrants, he had been compelled to flee for

his life and take refuge in the first homestead he came to.

On hearing this last part of the story, Hunding's brow grew dark; and he declared with suppressed anger that they were his kinsfolk whom Woful had attacked, adding that he himself had been called to their aid, but arriving too late to be of assistance, had returned to his house, only to find the flying foe upon his own hearth.

Siegmund, seeing that he had thus unwittingly sought shelter in the abode of an enemy, felt that his last hour had come, since he had no weapons for his defence; but Hunding, being bound by the laws of hospitality not to harm his guest till the morrow, declared that he was safe for that night, but should

die with morning light.

He then bade his wife prepare his evening draught, and retire for the night; but as Sieglinde moved towards the inner chamber, she threw a tender, sympathising glance upon the despondent Siegmund. Then Hunding, having seen that the door was fastened, took up his weapons with a triumphant look at his doomed guest, and also departed to the sleeping-chamber; and Siegmund, left alone, sank upon the hearth with troubled thoughts.

Presently, as he lay gazing into the dying embers of the fire, the door of the inner chamber was softly opened, and the beautiful Sieglinde came towards him in haste, declaring that he might now depart in safety, since Hunding lay wrapped in helpless slumber, she having mixed a narcotic with his evening draught. She added that a wonderful weapon also lay ready to his hand; and then, returning the tender glance bestowed upon her by Siegmund, she began to tell him a strange story.

On the day she was wedded to Hunding against her will, having been forced to the deed by fierce ravishers who had stolen her from her home in early childhood, a stranger, wrapped in a dark cloak, had suddenly entered this very hall, and plunging a shining

sword deep down to the hilt in the ash-tree's stem, had declared that it possessed magic qualities, and should become the prize of whichever hero could pluck it forth. All the warriors at the festive board had tried to wrench the sword from its sheath, but in vain; and Sieglinde added that she knew by the kindly glance bestowed upon her by the stranger, whose features had reminded her of the father she had been stolen from, that the magic weapon was reserved for some brave hero who should one day come to offer her his love and help, and who, her heart whispered, now stood before her.

These words filled Siegmund with an intoxication of joy; and no longer able to queil the love that already surged in his heart, he clasped the beautiful maiden in his arms with rapture. But as Sieglinde gazed upon her beloved, his features and glances suddenly reminded her of the stranger who had plunged the sword in the tree; and on learning from Siegmund that his father had been known as Volsung, she exclaimed that that was the name of her own father, whose features had been reflected in those of the stranger who had appeared on her wedding

Siegmund, quickly realising that it was his long-lost twin-sister who stood before him, and whose love he had won, embraced her with even greater joy than before; and knowing now that his mysterious father, Volsung, had placed the sword in the ash-tree to be plucked thence by his own son only, he hastened to the mighty tree and triumphantly drew the weapon forth, announcing its name to be "Needful." Then the enraptured lovers, hand locked in hand, rushed forth joyously into the sweet spring night; and hastening with glad footsteps through the moon-lit forest, they sought a place of refuge from the vengeance of Hunding, who, they knew, would follow them on awakening from the effects of the narcotic.

Now Siegmund and Sieglinde, though they knew it not, were in reality the twin-children of the great

god Wotan, who, in the guise of the hero Volsung, had wooed and won a beautiful maiden of the earth; and from the first naught but misery had fallen to

the lot of the ill-fated pair.

As soon as Wotan's celestial wife, Fricka, the goddess of Marriage and upholder of conjugal bonds, knew of the unholy love of Siegmund and Sieglinde, and of their flight from Hunding, she was filled with indignation; and summoning her roving and inconstant husband, she poured forth angry reproaches upon him for countenancing this violation of her laws. She demanded that the recreant lovers should be overtaken and punished, and that Siegmund's magic sword should be broken; and knowing that Wotan had already despatched one of his attendant war-maidens, the beautiful Valkyrie, Brynhildr, to assist his son against the pursuing Hunding, she bade him instantly recall her.

It was in vain that Wotan, who really loved his earth-born children, pleaded for the unhappy lovers; and the angry goddess gave him no peace until he promised to cause Siegmund to be vanquished by

his avenger.

So the great god reluctantly called back the Valkyrie, Brynhildr; and when the beautiful warmaiden appeared before him, clad in dazzling mail, fully armed and mounted on a fiery celestial steed, he sadly commanded her to give assistance to the wronged Hunding, instead of to Siegmund, as he had at first bade her. Brynhildr, who knew that Wotan still longed to help his son, went forth upon her mission with a heavy heart, and soon came up with the fleeing lovers.

After wandering onwards for many days, only stopping for necessary rest, Siegmund and his stolen bride had at length come to a wild, rocky height; but even here they did not feel safe, for they knew that Hunding was quickly following on their track. But Sieglinde was so much exhausted by her long journey that she could go no farther; and sinking upon a

sheltering ledge, she presently fell into a troubled

sleep.

As Siegmund watched beside the sleeping form of his beloved one, he suddenly beheld the dazzling figure of the beautiful war-maiden, Brynhildr; and knowing that the Valkyries only appeared to heroes doomed to fall in battle, he asked in trembling tones whom she sought. Brynhildr answered solemnly that she had come to bear him, Siegmund the Volsung, hence with her to Valhalla, at the command of Wotan; but when Siegmund eagerly asked if Sieglinde would accompany him there, she replied that the maiden must remain on earth.

Then Siegmund passionately declared that he would forego all the celestial glories of Valhalla if he might not share them with his beloved one; adding that with his magic sword, Needful, he would gain the victory in the approaching fight, and thus defeat

Wotan of his prey.

Now when Brynhildr saw what a passionate love it was that bound these two young hearts, she was filled with tender pity; and at last, after a short struggle with herself, she resolved to disobey the command of Wotan, and give her assistance to the lovers, instead

of to their enemy.

Presently the young warrior heard the sound of horn-calls coming nearer and nearer; and soon afterwards Hunding came in sight. A violent thunderstorm now began to rage, and the sombre gloom of the wild scene was constantly illumined by the awful glare of lightning; but, heedless of the warring elements, Siegmund dashed forward to meet the vengeful Hunding as he appeared on the craggy height, and quickly clashed swords with him.

The noise of the storm awakened Sieglinde; and she uttered a shriek of terror as a brilliant flash of lightning revealed to her the furiously fighting forms of Hunding and Siegmund, with the Valkyrie, Brynhildr, soaring defensively over the latter, guarding him with her shield. But at this moment there was

an unexpected interruption; for Wotan himself, enraged by the Valkyrie's disobedience to his will, and bound by his oath to his celestial spouse, suddenly swooped down upon the combatants, with anger in his mien.

Terrified at this awful apparition of the all-powerful god, Brynhildr retreated before him; and as she did so, Siegmund's magic sword broke upon the outstretched mighty spear of Wotan, leaving him thus the prey of the triumphant Hunding, who quickly buried his weapon in the defenceless breast of his enemy.

As her vanquished lover uttered his last dying gasp, Sieglinde sank senseless to the ground; but Brynhildr snatched her up instantly, and mounting her fiery steed that stood waiting near, she rode wildly

away with her prize.

For a few moments Wotan gazed down sorrowfully upon the prostrate form of the hero-son he would so gladly have saved; and then, in a terrible outburst of wrath and grief, he killed the conquering Hunding, and disappeared on the wings of the storm in pursuit

of the flying Brynhildr.

The beautiful war-maiden rode at desperate speed; but, after travelling an immense distance, her noble steed at last fell exhausted at the top of a high rocky mountain. Upon the summit of this mountain, a band of mounted Valkyries in full armour had gathered to rest on their way to Valhalla, each with the dead body of a fallen warrior lying across her saddle-bag; and to these war-maidens, her sisters, Brynhildr hastened to beg assistance, bearing Sieglinde with her.

She quickly told them her story, and begged for a horse to continue her flight; but when the Valkyries knew that she was flying from the wrath of their beloved All-Father, they refused to give her aid, fearing lest Wotan's anger should fall upon them also, if they protected one who had disobeyed him.

Seeing that she could thus no longer protect the

now conscious Sieglinde, Brynhildr bade her fly onward alone, towards a certain forest ever shunned by Wotan; and when the poor maiden declared that she no longer desired to live, the inspired Valkyrie earnestly besought her not to despair, since she should become the mother of the greatest hero of the world, who should be called Siegfried. At the same time, she placed in her hands the broken pieces of Siegmund's magic sword, which she had seized as he fell to the ground; and she desired Sieglinde to keep the fragments for her son, who should forge them once more into a weapon of wondrous power.

Comforted, and filled with joy on hearing this prophecy, Sieglinde, no longer despairing, was eager to save herself from harm; and bestowing a grateful blessing upon her self-sacrificing protector, she quickly rushed away towards the gloomy forest

indicated.

Amidst appalling thunder and lightning Wotan now appeared upon the mountain top; and as Brynhildr stood humbly before him, with downcast mien, the angry god declared that for her disobedience to him, she should be a Valkyrie no longer, and that, deprived of divinity and the sweet joys of Valhalla, she should be doomed to lie in an enchanted sleep, for the first passing churl to awaken and call his own.

On hearing her terrible sentence, Brynhildr sank upon her knees; and with a despairing cry, she implored the All-Father not to leave her to become the prey of any mere braggart, but to place a circle of fire around the rock upon which she must lie in charmed sleep, that she might at least not be awakened by any but a hero valiant enough to brave the

flames to gain her.

For some time Wotan refused to grant her plea; but at last he yielded, overcome by the tenderness he still felt for her, for Brynhildr had ever been the best beloved of all his war-maidens. He declared that he would call forth such fiery flames to protect her slumbers as should scare away all timid cravens, and

that only one who had never known fear should awaken her—the greatest hero of the world; and Brynhildr was filled with joy and gratitude, knowing that this mighty feat was reserved for the yet unborn

hero-son of Siegmund and Sieglinde.

Wotan now gently kissed the beautiful Valkyrie upon both eyes, which instantly closed in slumber; and bearing her tenderly in his arms, he laid her upon a low, moss-covered rock covering her graceful mail-clad form with the long shield she had borne so bravely. Then, striking the rock three times with his spear, he uttered an invocation to the god Loki to come to his aid, and out leapt a stream of fiery flames, which quickly surrounded the mountain top; and with a last long look of affection at the sleeping maiden, the god returned to his celestial abode.

But the fair Brynhildr lay wrapped in peaceful slumber upon her fire-encircled couch; and though many bold travellers longed to possess the lovely maiden, none were found willing to brave the scorching flames—a deed that awaited the coming of the

world's greatest hero, Siegfried the Fearless.

PART III

SIEGFRIED

MIME the Nibeling stood working at his forge one summer day in the gloomy forest cavern that served him as a dwelling-place; and as he hammered at a fine long sword he had laid upon the anvil, he was filled with despondency, knowing that, in spite of all his skill in forging, he could not make a sword that would not be splintered at the first mighty stroke of the noble youth for whom it was intended.

For Mime, though but a hideous gnome of evil disposition, and full of guile, had been the means of preserving the precious infant life of Siegfried, the promised hero-son of Siegmund and Sieglinde; and he had nourished him with great care, knowing that this child was destined, in years to come, to slay Fafnir, the giant dragon that guarded the mighty

treasure of his Nibelung brother, Alberic.

He cunningly hoped by means of Siegfried to obtain this coveled treasure for himself; and so he kept the child ignorant of the secret of the Rhinegold, and of his own high birth. As Siegfried grew to manhood, he had no knowledge of his true parentage, though he utterly refused to regard Mime as his father; for in spite of his protecting care, he hated the dwarf, feeling unconsciously that he had only preserved him for his own evil ends.

Mime knew this, and feared him accordingly; and as he now stood working at his forge this summer day, he trembled as he thought of the youth's wonderful strength, for every sword he had yet made for him, Siegfried had only contemptuously snapped in half.

Just as he finished the sword, Siegfried himself dashed boisterously into the cave, leading by a leash a great bear he had caught in the forest; for fear was unknown to the hero-son of Sieglinde, and savage

beasts he but regarded as his play-fellows.

He was a noble-looking youth of dazzling beauty, mighty strength, and dauntless courage as befitted a descendant of the great god, Wotan; and his contempt for the puny Mime was quickly shown by the careless manner in which, in mere wanton mischief, he drove the fierce bear round the cave after the wretched gnome, who shrank back in abject fear.

At last, having laughingly driven the growling beast back to the forest, Siegfried returned, and demanded the new sword he had bidden Mime forge for him; and the dwarf timidly handed him the blade he had just finished, which would have been regarded as a mighty weapon by any ordinary mortal.

But Siegfried laughed derisively as he took up the sword to test its strength; and striking it but once upon the anvil, the steel immediately shivered to

pieces.

To stem the torrent of wrath that now burst upon him, Mime whiningly implored Siegfried to remember the loving care he had ever shown for him since infancy; but the youth declared that he hated the sight of the gnome, and despised the pretended love he professed for him, since he knew him to be at heart false and evil.

He then demanded to be told who were his parents, and how he came to be left in the charge of a puny dwarf; and Mime, terrified at the authoritative flash in the eyes of Siegfried, and not daring to deceive him longer, told him in trembling tones all that he knew. He said that he had found in the forest one day a beautiful woman, named Sieglinde, who lay in tears and deep suffering; and carrying her to

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his cave, he had tended her with care. She gave birth to a child during the night, and dying almost immediately afterwards, had left the babe to the care of Mime, bidding him call her son by the name

of Siegfried.

Filled with emotion as he listened to this sad story, Siegfried next demanded some proof of its truth; and very reluctantly Mime presently produced the pieces of a broken sword, which he said the dying woman had also left in his charge for her son, whose herofather, she declared, had used it in his last fight. Overjoyed at the possession of this great treasure, which proved that his father had been a noble warrior, Siegfried now commanded Mime to forge the pieces afresh into a mighty sword once more, and enthusiastically declaring that with his father's weapon he would win himself renown, he rushed forth into the forest to tell his joy to the birds and beasts he loved so well.

But Mime was left in despair; for though he had many times in secret tried to weld the broken pieces of the magic sword, Needful, he had never yet succeeded, and knew it was beyond his skill to do so.

As the dwarf stood despondently at his anvil, a stranger, wrapped in a dark mantle, suddenly entered the cave and sat down to rest by the hearth; and though he called himself a Wanderer, Mime soon learnt to his terror, from the stranger's huge spear causing thunder to mutter as it struck the ground, that it was in reality the great god Wotan who had thus invaded his dwelling.

Although ill-received by the dwarf, the Wanderer calmly kept his seat; and in the course of conversation, he announced that Mime should fall a prey to the just wrath of one who had never known fear, and who alone possessed the power to forge the mighty

sword, Needful.

With these ominous words the stranger vanished, and as Mime shrank back to his forge, trembling, Siegfried returned from the forest, and demanded his sword. The dwarf declared that he had not skill enough to forge the broken blade, and he added that it could only be restored by one who had never felt fear.

Upon Siegfried eagerly demanding what this fear was. Mime tried to describe the feeling to him: and the youth declared that he had no knowledge of such tremblings, but was curious to experience them. Then Mime craftily remarked that he knew of a terrible giant dragon, named Fafnir, who would quickly teach him what fearing was; and Siegfreid exclaimed impetuously that the dwarf should conduct him to this monster without delay.

He then took up the fragments of the magic sword. declaring that he alone, who knew not fear, would restore the weapon; and filing down the steel, he melted it in a crucible, and began to forge it afresh. Amidst the roaring of the bellows and the clang of the falling hammer, Mime sat lost in meditation. wondering how he could turn the youth's power to his own purposes; and at last an evil idea flashed

He would let the hero slay the dragon and even secure the treasure; and then, when exhausted by his exertions, he would offer him a cooling draught containing a deadly poison, which should instantly cause his death, and the great prize would thus fall into the hands of Mime the Nibelung.

Siegfried had now fashioned his sword, and was singing gleefully as he hammered it on the anvil. calling it lovingly by name, and finishing it off with wondrous skill; and by the time the gnome had brewed his fatal draught, the magic blade, Needful,

was completely restored.

across his brain.

With a loud shout of joy Siegfried seized the mighty weapon, and struck it with all his force upon the anvil to test its strength; and the blow was so great that the anvil split from top to bottom, and fell asunder with a terrific crash.

But Needful remained bright and unscratched; and

swinging the wonderful sword exultingly over his head Siegfried rushed out of the cave, calling on the awed and shrinking Mime to lead him to the dragon's den. The dwarf, quickly recovering himself, and remembering the prize in store for him, took up the horn containing the fatal draught he had brewed; and joining Siegfried immediately, he led him unerringly through the forest to the wild spot where Fafnir's cave was situated.

Here Alberic the Nibelung had been awaiting the dragon's death for many years; and having learnt this very day from Wotan, the Wanderer, of the near approach of Siegfried, he had slipped back into a

rocky cleft to watch what happened.

Soon afterwards, Siegfried and Mime came forth from the forest; but the timid dwarf did not dare to remain long near the cave, and quickly departed to hide, after telling the youth that the dragon would soon appear. The young hero presently blew a long, loud blast upon his hunting-horn; and almost immediately afterwards, the terrible giant dragon, Fafnir, came out from his cave, demanding who summoned him.

Siegfried stared at the great beast in amazement; but not a single spark of alarm was in his brave heart as he boldly announced that he had come to learn what fearing was. Fafnir replied that he was overbold, since he should now serve him as food; but upon this, Siegfried, having no mind to provide a meal for the unwieldy creature, though fearless still, drew his sword, Needful, and smilingly sprang

forward to meet his enemy.

With fire and poisonous fumes issuing from his nostrils, the dragon rushed upon him; but as it raised its huge body, Siegfried dashed boldly beneath the gaping jaws, and buried his sword in the monster's breast.

As the dragon rolled over, dead, Siegfried drew his sword triumphantly from its body; but in so doing, he accidentally tasted the creature's blood. Suddenly he discovered, to his joy, that he could now understand the language of the birds around him: and being especially attracted by the notes of a pretty wood-bird, he went nearer to listen to what it had to say. The wood-bird told him to enter the cave. and possess himself of the dragon's treasure, adding that if only he gained the Tarnhelm and magic Ring, he could make himself lord of the whole world.

Full of joy, Siegfried rushed into the cave; and at that moment Mime and Alberic came forth from opposite directions, scowling with surprise and anger as they recognised each other. They instantly began to quarrel as to which should have the treasure; but when Siegfried presently issued from the cave, with the Ring on his finger and the wishing-cap tucked into his belt. Alberic departed, content to let his curse

take effect upon the spoiler.

As Siegfried passed under the trees, the wood-bird again spoke to him: and this time his feathered friend warned him that Mime was his enemy, and meant to poison him in order to obtain the treasures he had won. The youth, having always suspected the dwarf of evil intentions, was thus put upon his guard; and when Mime presently drew near with insinuating smile, and pleasantly offered him the horn of poison as a "cooling drink," he instantly plunged his sword into the traitor's heart.

As the crafty dwarf fell dead at his feet, the woodbird spoke yet once again; and in sweet, thrilling tones, it now told him of a glorious bride whom he might win-the beautiful fallen Valkyrie, Brynhildr, who still slept upon her rocky fastness, surrounded by fire, and waiting for the one fearless hero of the

world to brave the flames and possess her.

Filled with rapture at the thought that the joys of love might thus be his, Siegfried eagerly desired to know in which direction so fair a prize lay; and for answer, the pretty wood-bird spread its wings and fluttered along in front to show him the way. Through miles and miles of forest depths the feathered guide flew without resting; and then, when night had passed and the rosy dawn appeared, it suddenly vanished, and Siegfried, finding himself at the foot of a wild mountain, the rocky top of which was encircled by fire, knew that he had arrived at

his goal.

But as he approached the mountain-side his path was suddenly blocked by a stranger. This was none other than Wotan, the Wanderer, who still roamed the world, conscious of his approaching doom, which should be brought nearer by this same radiant Volsung youth, and who, having vainly sought advice from the wise goddess Erda, now half-heartedly hoped

to oppose the hero himself.

Seeing a stranger barring his path with extended spear, Siegfried drew his magic blade, Needful, and with a mighty stroke hewed the spear in two pieces, upon which a blinding flash of lightning rent the air, followed by a loud crash of thunder. Knowing now that it was useless to withstand this heroyouth who had thus destroyed his weapon of power, Wotan vanished in a cloud of darkness, and retreating in despair to Valhalla, he there awaited the Twilight of the Gods, which he knew was now quickly approaching, since he, the mightiest of them all, had been defeated.

But Siegfried, free to pursue his way once more, dashed joyfully up the mountain-side, and plunging fearlessly through the fierce encircling flames, he reached the rock beyond in safety. Here the Valkyrie, Brynhildr, still lay peacefully slumbering; and gently removing her protecting shield and helmet, Siegfried, entranced, stood gazing in breathless silence upon her dazzling loveliness. A passionate love surged up in his quickly-beating heart; and kneeling beside the fair maiden, he pressed a tender kiss upon her lips.

Instantly Brynhildr opened her beautiful eyes, and rising from her rocky couch greeted Siegfried with joy, telling him that she had loved him all

through her charmed sleep, knowing that he alone

should awaken her to life once more.

Then Siegfried, enraptured, clasped her in his arms, entreating her to accept his love; and though Brynhildr at first shrank back, offended at the touch of a mortal, she could not long fight against the answering passion awakened in her own breast. Remembering that her divinity was now lost for ever, she placed her hand in Siegfried's with joy; and as the hero held his beautiful bride in his arms, he felt that the dark night-time of his early years had at last dawned into a glorious day-time of light and joy.

PART IV

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

(Die Götterdämmerung)

When night-time fell, after the meeting of Brynhildr and Siegfried, the three Nornir, or Fates, appeared on the Valkyrie's fire-encircled rock, and crouching amidst the rugged stones, began to sing as they spun their golden cord of the runes of Destiny.

But although the radiant lovers slumbered sweetly in a neighbouring cave, and all the world around seemed calm and peaceful, the weird song of the three dread Sisters was full of gloom and sadness; for they knew that, owing to the fatal power of the Nibelung's curse, disaster was about to fall, not only upon these lovers, but also upon the dwellers in Asgard, whose doom was quickly approaching.

Suddenly, as they sang, their rope of Destiny broke asunder; and with wild, despairing cries the three Nornir disappeared, knowing now that the Twilight of

the Gods would soon begin.

The night wore on, and when daylight appeared the lovers issued from the cave: Siegfried, in full armour, with his mighty sword girdled about him, and Brynhildr leading her horse by its bridle. For the beautiful Valkyrie would not keep her hero, dearly though she loved him, from gaining glory and honour in the world; and Siegfried, having already learned much of her divine wisdom, was now about to set forth in search of fresh exploits and adventures.

For a parting gift to his love, Siegfried placed his magic Ring upon Brynhildr's finger as the sign of their troth, as yet knowing naught of its fatal power; and Brynhildr, in return, bestowed upon him her noble horse, Grani. The lovers swore to be true to each other, and then, after a passionate farewell. they parted.

After many wanderings, Siegfried, following the course of the Rhine, came to the Hall of the Gibichungs, or Burgundian tribe. Here a powerful king, named Gunther, reigned, and with him lived his beautiful sister, Gudrun, and their half-brother, Hagen, whose father was none other than the

wretched gnome, Alberic.

Now, Hagen, though so keen-witted as to be the chosen adviser of his royal half-brother, had also inherited the evil qualities and greed of his gnomefather; and hearing of the approach of the hero, Siegfried, whose wonderful exploits were by this time world-renowned, he laid a cunning plan, by means of which the Gibichungs might win, or at least

share, the fearless one's power and wealth.

Relating the story of the fire-encircled Valkyrie, he pointed out to Gunther that Brynhildr would make him a radiant bride, and that if Gudrun could be wedded to Siegfried, they would thus secure the Nibelung's treasure, which would gain them the mastery of the whole world. He suggested that in order to carry out this plan they should give Siegfried, on his arrival, a magic draught they possessed, by means of which he should forget his love for Byrnhildr, and conceive a passion for Gudrun; and Gunther and his sister, being dazzled at the prospect of being so nobly mated, gladly agreed to the scheme, whilst Hagen, cunningly keeping back his knowledge of Brynhildr's and Siegfried's vows of love, rejoiced, because of the opportunity that would occur for securing the treasure he coveted.

So when Siegfried arrived in the Gibichungs' land he was met on the banks of the Rhine by Hagen, and conducted at once to the royal Hall; and here he received a joyous welcome from King Gunther and his fair sister.

Siegfried was greatly pleased with his kindly welcome; and when Gudrun presently offered him a well-filled drinking-horn, in token of friendship and hospitality, he gladly drank off its contents to the

health of his beloved Brynhildr.

But the magic love-potion had been mingled with the draught, and no sooner had he set down the horn than the likeness of Brynhildr faded from his mind, and all memory of his love for her became a blank. It seemed to him that the fair Gudrun was the first maiden he had ever beheld, and a passionate desire

to possess her suddenly grew up within him.

Gudrun beheld his ardent glances with great joy, for an answering love had quickly sprung up in her own heart for the noble hero before her. Taking her willing hand in his, Siegfried led the maiden, who now possessed his whole heart, to her royal brother, and eagerly requested her hand in marriage; and to this Gunther gave his consent on condition that the Valkyrie, Brynhildr, was secured as a bride for himself. Siegfried gladly agreed to go through the fire once more, and woo Brynhildr for his new friend; and when the two had sworn an oath of brotherhood, they set out together to begin their enterprise at once.

In a royal barque they sailed down the Rhine a certain distance, and then when the Valkyrie's rock came in sight, Siegfried bade Gunther remain in the boat, whilst he himself went forward alone to climb the mountain. By means of his Tarnhelm, or wishing-cap, he took on the form and appearance of Gunther—the two having agreed that the martial maiden must be wooed and won by Siegfried in the likeness of the king—and promising to be loyal and faithful to his oath, the young hero began to climb the rocky height.

Brynhildr had just received a visit from her

Valkyrie sister, Valtrauta, who had come to entreat her to restore the Nibelung's fatal Ring to the Rhine nymphs once more, as the only remaining hope of saving the dwellers in Asgard; for Wotan had now gathered the gods together in Valhalla—around which he had caused to be piled a forest of faggots from the world's ash-tree, hewn down at his command—and all were silently and sadly awaiting their approaching doom, the dreaded Twilight, that meant for them destruction. The only glimpse of hope now left was for the mighty Ring to be returned to the Rhine, when its curse upon men and gods would become void; and on learning this from the beloved All-Father, Valtrauta had mounted her war-horse and flown at once to her fallen sister, who she knew possessed the Ring.

But Brynhildr, cut off as she was from the joys of Valhalla, would not part with her love-token, which was more precious to her than all the dwellers in Asgard; and in spite of the passionate entreaties of Valtrauta, she utterly refused to give up the Ring.

Finding that her pleading was in vain, the despairing Valkyrie was compelled to depart; and no sooner had she gone, than Siegfried, in the form and garb of Gunther, sprang fearlessly through the zone of fire, and advancing towards Brynhildr, whom he regarded as a stranger, announced calmly, in a disguised voice, that having braved the flames he had

come to possess her as a bride.

Full of horror at being thus wooed by a stranger during the absence of her hero-lover, Brynhildr shrank back, and indignantly refused to yield herself to this bold intruder, receiving strength from her magic Ring; but upon her talisman being wrested from her by the superior force of Siegfried, she became powerless, and was compelled to submit to his will. Siegfried now led her to the cave as their bridal chamber, but, mindful of his oath and loyalty to Gunther, whose wooing he had so strangely undertaken, he laid his sword, Needful, between them.

Next day, at dawn, the disguised Siegfried took the bride he had won for another by the hand, and led her safely through the flames and down the mountain-side, and on being met at the river-side by Gunther, he instantly vanished by means of his Tarnhelm, and transported himself to the Gibichungs' Hall. So when the true Gunther took her by the hand, Brynhildr regarded him as her wooer of the night before, and the pair entered the barque.

Now, during the absence of Gunther and Siegfried, Hagen had been visited in a vision by his gnome-father, Alberic, who besought him to seek quickly an opportunity to kill Siegfried, and so secure from him the magic Ring by means of which the Nibelung might regain his lost power; and Hagen gladly agreed

to use his craft for this purpose.

When Gunther returned with Brynhildr to the Gibichungs' Hall, great preparations were made to celebrate the two marriages in splendid state, and all the vassals and warriors quickly assembled to join in the revels.

All this time Brynhildr had remained submissive and downcast; but now, on entering the Hall with Gunther and finding herself confronted by Siegfried, who led Gudrun by the hand, she started violently and gazed on him with utter astonishment. Suddenly observing the magic Ring upon his finger, the true identity of the bold wooer who had intruded upon her rocky fastness flashed across her mind, and, full of furious anger at the discovery, she announced to all the company that she had been betrayed, and that Siegfried, in his wooing of her in disguise, had dishonoured their King.

Siegfried fearlessly defended himself, declaring that he had been loyal to his trust; but his explanations were designedly confounded by Hagen, who, for his own evil purposes, used his cunning wit to persuade all that the great hero had indeed acted as

a base traitor.

Siegfried, however, having a clear conscience, still

declared his innocence; and taking the hand of Gudrun, whom he now loved passionately owing to the effect of the love-potion, he led her gaily to join in the revels, followed by most of the company.

But Brynhildr and Gunther remained in their places, overcome with indignation, still believing Siegfried to be false; and seeing them alone, Hagen joined them, and with cunning words strengthened their suspicions and persuaded them that it was their duty to avenge themselves for the ill that had been done them. He at last obtained their consent to the murder of Siegfried, which he agreed to carry out himself at a hunting party next day; and having arranged this, they rejoined the revellers, and the wedding rejoicings went forward once more.

Next day, a grand royal hunt was organised, and Siegfried, in eager pursuit of prey, found himself at one time alone on the bank of the river. As he stood there a moment, gazing into the water, the three lovely Rhine maidens, Flosshildr, Woglinda, and Wellgunda, swam towards the shore and gave him glad greeting, knowing that this was the great hero who now possessed their long-lost treasure; and in coaxing tones they entreated him to restore the

magic Ring to them.

Siegfried, however, refused to listen to their pleadings, even when the nymphs told him that if he retained it longer, the talisman would quickly bring death upon him; and as the Rhine maidens swam away disconsolately, he laughed aloud at their

warning.

At that moment, Gunther, Hagen, and the rest of the hunting party joined him, and sitting down to rest upon the river bank, the huntsmen began to feast and make merry together. To amuse his new friends, Siegfried began to tell them the story of his life and adventures; but just as he was relating how he had scaled the fire-encircled mountain, Hagen crept softly forward and suddenly stabbed him in the back with his hunting-spear, announcing to the

dismayed onlookers that the deed was done in retri-

bution for the hero's betrayal of their King.

Siegfried sank to the ground immediately; and the effect of the magic potion of forgetfulness waning as his life-blood welled forth, all his old love for the beautiful Valkyrie he had so innocently betrayed returned to bless his last moments, and with Brynhildr's name upon his lips, he died.

The dead hero's body was quickly borne back to the royal Hall; and when the fair Gudrun beheld the lifeless form of her husband of a day, she fell sense.

less to the ground, overcome by despair.

Hagen and Gunther now began to quarrel as to which should possess the magic Ring; and in the

furious fight that ensued Gunther was killed.

Loud cries of woe quickly arose, and in the dismay and confusion that followed, Brynhildr hastened forward. At sight of the dead Siegfried, she was filled with utmost grief, and learning from the reviving and sorrowing Gudrun of his innocence, and remembering naught but her passionate love for him, she firmly resolved to perish with her hero.

In a commanding tone none dared to disobey she silenced the noise and confusion around her, and bade the warriors instantly to build up a funeral pyre upon the banks of the Rhine; and when this had been done, the dead body of Siegfried was laid upon it. She then tenderly placed his magic Ring upon her finger, and seizing a lighted torch, set the faggots ablaze.

She now understood that through her alone the sin of the great All-Father must be atoned for, and that by her sacrifice of Love, the world should be redeemed. The curse of the Ring would also be removed by her death, for with her ashes the fatal

Gold would be restored to the Rhine.

Thus nobly resolving to sacrifice herself, she desired two Ravens hovering near—the messengers of Wotan—to return to the great god so sadly awaiting his end, and announce to him that his destiny was about to be fulfilled; and also to bid the god Loki, who still guarded the rock upon which she had lain in a charmed sleep, to depart with his fire to Valhalla.

She then mounted her faithful steed, Grani, and as the flames sprang brightly upwards, leaped high with him into the midst of the burning pyre, and perished beside the corpse of her hero-lover. As the flames died away, the river suddenly rose, and overflowing its banks, covered the remains of the funeral pile; and at the same moment, the three Rhine nymphs swam up to secure their Gold.

Hagen made a last frantic effort to reach the talisman by plunging into the flood; but being seized by the nymphs, he was dragged beneath the waves and

drowned.

So the Rhine maidens at last regained their precious treasure, and the curse of the Ring was removed; but the dwellers in Asgard were doomed, for Loki had

already accomplished his mission.

Suddenly a fiery, crimson glow appeared in the heavens, ever spreading and increasing to a dazzling brilliancy; and as the warriors and mourners gazed with awe upon this wondrous sight, they saw that Valhalla, with all its glorious array of gods and heroes, was already engulfed in an ocean of leaping flames.

The Twilight of the Gods had come!

PARSIFAL

In the early days of Christianity, when troublous times beset the path of the true believer, the Holy Grail, or Sacred Cup from which our Saviour had drank at the Last Supper, and which had afterwards received the blood that flowed from His pierced side as He lay upon the Cross, had been brought, together with the spear which had wounded Him, by a company of angels into the mountainous district of Northern Spain; and here the holy relics were reverently received with joy and gratitude by the good King, Titurel, who built for them a Temple-Sanctuary and castle upon the beautiful mountain of Monsalvat, where they were constantly guarded by brave knights of stainless purity and integrity.

Great was the reward of their faithful service, for the Holy Grail possessed miraculous powers, bestowing both bodily as well as spiritual strength and nourishment upon its guardians, giving them such means of grace that they were able to perform mighty deeds for the good of mankind; and with the Sacred Spear, the righteous King Titurel was able to keep at bay the infidels and all who were opposed to Christianity, and who struggled vainly to break down

his stronghold.

None but the pure and innocent could approach the holy sanctuary, or hope to derive benefit from its wondrous powers; for the Grail Knights, by reason of their own spotless purity, could read the hearts of all comers, and sternly repulsed any who were unworthy.

Thus it came about that when Klingsor, the most

wicked of all magicians, and the ruler of the heathen and infidel races, once sought the Grail, hoping to be released from his many sins, partly seized by a temporary fit of remorse, but chiefly for the means of worldly advancement and power, he was denied entrance to the sacred temple; for the Guardian of the Grail saw clearly into the deceitful heart of the sorcerer, and reading there, as in a book, his impious and unholy thoughts, he drove him back with horror.

Rendered furious by his ignominious defeat, Klingsor determined to be revenged, and for this purpose he set up an Enchanted Castle on the southern slopes of the same mountain, surrounding it with luxuriant gardens in which he placed sirens of dazzling beauty, who with their seductive charms should ensnare the Knights of the Grail who wandered that way, and lure them by unholy passions and evil spells to destruction from which there should be no return.

Many were the knights thus enticed from the paths of purity to a life of sinful pleasures and soul-destroy-

ing voluptuousness.

Thus many years passed away; and, at last, good King Titurel, now well-stricken in years, felt himself growing too old to perform the sacred offices of the Holy Grail any longer; so he invested his son, Amfortas, the handsomest and most glorious of all the knights, with the royal mantle and made him

King in his stead.

The young King Amfortas, impatient of Klingsor's evil influence, determined to vanquish the wicked Enchanter and put an end to his dangerous magic; and, armed with the sacred spear, he went fearlessly forth one day upon his great mission. But Klingsor beheld the royal knight's approach and summoned to his aid Kundry, a strange being, who, against her will, had ever been subservient to his power; and bidding her practice her arts upon his enemy, he had little doubt as to the issue.

Nor was he mistaken, for Kundry (who could

assume any shape) transformed herself into a woman of such surpassing beauty that Amfortas felt his senses leave him as he gazed upon her. It was in vain that the young King struggled to maintain his integrity and to fight against the evil influence that closed so surely around him; for Kundry never relaxed her seductions until he was locked in her embrace, in the snares of guilty passion.

Soon, Klingsor, stealing unawares upon his victim, as he lay thus entranced, seized the sacred spear and stabbed him in the side with it; and then, with a triumphant laugh, he rushed back to his Enchanted

Castle, bearing the holy relic with him.

The wounded King was carried back by his faithful knights to the Sanctuary, full of remorse for his sin and doomed to suffer agonies of pain for many long, weary years; for the wound inflicted by the evil sorcerer throbbed and burned unceasingly, and could never be healed until the holy spear should be reclaimed and brought back to the Sanctuary, and the unhappy Amfortas remained helpless and agonised in mind and body, with a wound that would not close.

Once, as the King lay groaning in the Sanctuary, the angels of the Holy Grail were heard proclaiming that the sacred spear could alone be regained by "The Blameless Fool," one who, simple and pure, unacquainted with worldly knowledge, should, from pure, whole-hearted sympathy with the sufferer's terrible agony, recognise the woes of suffering humanity, and by such loving pity bring redemption. This, then, was the one hope held out, and the sublime deed to be performed; and, after many long years of woe, the deliverer of Amfortas appeared.

One early dawn, Gurnemanz, one of the oldest of the Grail Knights, was resting with his Esquires in a glade within the sacred domains, waiting for the arrival of Amfortas, who was to be carried, in accordance with his usual daily custom, to bathe in the lake near by, that its soothing waters might ease his ever-burning wound for a short time; and as the first rays of the rising sun shone forth, the solemn morning bell of the Sanctuary was heard calling all to their devotions.

At the sound of the bell, the watchers in the glade knelt reverently to offer up their morning prayer; and as they rose once more to their feet they were joined

by other knights.

As the newcomers spoke sadly with old Gurnemanz of the perpetual sufferings of the King, a wild female figure was seen riding furiously towards them; who, upon approaching the knights, flung herself from the foaming steed and hastened to them, bearing in

her hand a small crystal vial.

This was none other than Kundry, the witchmaiden, who, when temporarily freed from the evil influence of the sorcerer, Klingsor, would serve the Knights of the Grail as message-bearer, and, by the performance of extraordinary feats of endurance, would seem as though striving to atone by such penances for the evil deeds she did when unable to resist her sinful nature and the commands of her unholy master. She was well-known to the knights. some of whom, however, regarded her with scorn and suspicion, knowing her to be a sinner; but Gurnemanz was always kind and gentle with her, and would often reprove his companions for their hostile attitude, declaring that though she might be under an evil curse, yet she did penance by serving the Grail, and that when she was absent for long, some misfortune was sure to happen to them.

Kundry now appeared as a wild, half-savage creature, clad in a fantastic robe fastened by a girdle of snake-skins, and with long flowing locks of black hair and piercing black eyes, sometimes wildly flashing but more usually fixed and glassy; and having travelled far in search of a healing balsam for the wounded King, she handed the vial to Gurnemanz,

roughly refusing all thanks.

Amfortas, groaning with pain, now appeared in

the glade in a litter borne by a number of noble knights, and having received Kundry's balsam from Gurnemanz, he thanked her for her gift, although he knew it could afford relief but for a few hours. He was then carried forward to the lake; and soon afterwards—as Gurnemanz remained lost in his sad thoughts, standing beside the now prostrate Kundry, who had flung herself exhausted on the ground—loud cries of indignation were suddenly heard, and as the old knight looked around, he saw a wild swan slowly sink to the ground and die.

At the same moment, the Esquires dragged forth a handsome youth, whose beauty and look of perfect innocence and purity made all regard him with interest and wonder, and yet whose bow and arrows proclaimed him as the slayer of the fair bird, a species held sacred by the Guardians of the Grail.

Gurnemanz poured forth indignant reproaches upon the youth, who, however, appeared unconscious that his deed was wrong; but on seeing the sorrow he had caused, his own heart was touched, and suddenly, breaking his bow and arrows, he impetuously flung

them away.

Gurnemanz, struck by the noble looks of the young stranger, began to question him; but the youth declared that he knew not from whence he had come, nor what his name was, nor who his father had been, though he recollected that his mother's name was "Heart-in-Sorrow," and that they had dwelt

together in the forest wilds.

Kundry, who, in her weary wanderings over the world, had knowledge of everything, now approached and declared that the stranger's father had fallen in battle, and that his mother had brought him up in a desert place, where he could not learn the use of arms, nor gain any knowledge of the wicked world; and so the lad had led the pure, innocent life of nature, and knew not the meaning of evil. Having beheld a party of knights in glittering armour one and, he had followed them, full of wonder, forgetful

of the mother who so tenderly loved him, and whom Kundry now declared had died of grief at his loss.

On hearing this, the youth, feeling for the first time in his life for another than himself, sprang furiously at Kundry's throat, and would have choked her, had not Gurnemanz dragged him back; and then he sank down half-fainting, whilst the witch-maiden

hurried to bring water to refresh him.

Gurnemanz, astonished at the utter innocence and primitive simplicity of the handsome stripling, and recollecting the prophecy that one who should be a "Blameless Fool," pure and undefiled, would alone be found worthy to regain the lost spear, regarded the youth with new interest, feeling that the Holy Grail itself must have guided him thither as the one who should indeed perform the supreme deed; and gently laying his hand on the youth's shoulder, he began to tell him about the Holy Grail and its wonderful powers.

Kundry, meanwhile, had crept away unperceived to a thicket, and, overcome by a deadly weariness, sank down into a deep slumber; for this was the means by which Klingsor the sorcerer called her to perform his evil behests, and struggle as she might, she could not prevail against this fatal sleep.

Having explained to the wondering youth the mysterious nourishment and power given by the Holy Grail, the uncovering of which was about to be performed by the King, who had now left the lake and was being carried back to the castle, Gurnemanz took him to join in the sacred ceremony; for he saw plainly that the stranger had noble qualities in him, and believed that these would be stirred into actual being by the holy influence of the Sanctuary treasures.

When they reached the magnificent hall of the Temple, the knights were already assembled, waiting with rapt and reverent attention for the customary unveiling of the Grail, by which they received physical and spiritual food and strength.

The litter of Amfortas was carried forward and placed beside the holy shrine; and then, as all stood round expectantly, the voice of the aged King Titurel was heard from a niche in the background, where he sat in retirement, calling upon his son to uncover the Grail, that its wondrous blessing might yet once more

be bestowed upon its guardians.

Amfortas, suffering acutely from the burning and throbbing of his wound, broke forth into agonised lamentation, because he, the most unworthy of them all, should thus be the one whose duty it was to perform this, the holiest office of their order; and in despairing tones, he besought his father to take back his old authority and leave him to die. But the aged King declared he was too feeble to perform the blessed office, and was only kept alive by the daily strength he received from beholding the Grail; and he again commanded Amfortas to proceed with the duties of his position, since by continuing to serve the Grail in spite of his agony, he might atone for his guilt. The knights also reminded their fallen master of the promised deliverance from his woe, and Amfortas, somewhat comforted, raised himself painfully, and, unveiling the Holy Grail, waved it reverently to and fro, thus consecrating the bread and wine, which was then distributed, that all might partake of the wondrous Love-Feast.

As the Holy Cup was revealed, a brilliant light fell upon it, which caused it to glow with a rich wine purple colour, and to shed a soft heavenly effulgence on all around, and Amfortas, though he took no part in the meal, remained for some time in a state of rapt exaltation. Then, as he felt his wound break out afresh, as it ever did when he performed the sacred office, he uttered a long-drawn cry of agony and sank back, fainting and exhausted.

All this time, the strange youth had stood apart, taking no part in the ceremony, but remaining still and dazed, as though entranced; but when the wounded King gave forth his last cry of anguish, he

placed his hand with a convulsive movement over his heart, as though filled with an emotion entirely new

and strange to him.

But, though pity was thus unconsciously awakened in his breast, he did not yet understand the agonies of a conscious guilt, which was the wounded King's chief woe, nor did he comprehend the meaning of what he had just seen; and Gurnemanz, impatient at such seeming stupidity, and deeming him a fool indeed, irritably thrust him out through a side door of the Temple, bidding him depart to his old wild ways once more, knowing that he must first experience the stabs of passion and temptation in himself, and conquer the same, ere he could understand and feel sympathy for the woes and sins of others.

But the pity that had indeed stirred the youth's heart so strangely for the first time grew apace; and since he had learned from Gurnemanz the story of the lost spear, he determined to try to regain the sacred weapon which alone could give relief to the poor sufferer; and with a fearless spirit and a joyous step, he set off, alone and unafraid, to storm the

Enchanted Castle.

Klingsor, the sorcerer, saw him approaching, and at once recognised him as a dangerous foe, since his breastplate was purity, and his shield foolishness; and quickly he called to his aid the witch-maiden, Kundry, whom he had just awakened from the deep slumber of destiny by his magic spells, to work his evil will once more. But though Kundry could not prevail against the terrible power of Klingsor, she only obeyed his commands in anger and horror, doing against her will wicked deeds for which, when removed from her master's influence, she would tearfully endeavour to atone by her acts of mercy and service. She longed above all things to die, but could not: for she who had lived through all the ages, and laughed at everything good and pure, whose spirit had inspired the savage heart of Herodias, and had mocked the Saviour of the world, was now doomed to a path of evil for ever, compelled to lure all into

her snares of passion and sin.

On hearing that the simple Fool was to be her victim also, she asked Klingsor in despair if she was never to be released from his toil, and to find rest in eternal sleep; and the sorcerer replied that deliverance for her would only come when someone should be found strong and pure enough to resist her wiles. Kundry, with a heart-rending moan, now resigned herself to the terrible part of temptress she was thus compelled to play, being unable to resist her master's will; and Klingsor, from his magic tower, watched his approaching victim with malignant interest.

As the youth approached the Enchanted Castle with a light step and joyous heart, he found his entry opposed by the fallen knights who had been lured within its walls by Klingsor's beautiful sirens; but, fearlessly resisting them, he snatched a sword from the nearest, and continued boldly to scale the walls, wounding and scattering all who opposed him. For the degraded knights, once so brave and strong, had now grown weak and dull through indulgence, sloth, and voluptuous sin; and the fiery ardour and simple fearlessness of the young invader so daunted these dullards that they soon fled and left him master of the situation.

Having thus triumphed over the weak guardians of the Castle, the handsome stripling gazed proudly around him; and, perceiving the sorcerer's magic garden close at hand, he entered it, marvelling at its luxuriance.

Here he was quickly surrounded by Klingsor's sirens, beautiful flower-maidens, who, clad in gossamer garments, appeared like a throng of brilliant living flowers; and, bewildered and dazzled by the voluptuous beauty of these fair inhabitants of the magic garden, the young man gazed upon them with delight. The sirens, looking upon the handsome stranger as their lawful prey, instantly began to entice him into the snares of passion, each one trying

to win him for herself; but the simple youth remained calmly insensible to their soft persuasions, and at last they left him in anger, deeming him to be a Fool, indeed.

Then, suddenly, Kundry appeared, now wearing the form of a maiden more bewitchingly beautiful than any he had yet seen, calling to him in thrilling

tones by the name of "Parsifal."

Remembering that this was the name by which his mother had always called him, the youth approached the dazzling vision before him, filled with wonder; and Kundry, after explaining to him that his name meant "Pure-in-Folly," told him again of his mother's love and devotion, and how she had died of grief at his absence from her.

Overcome at the thought of the woe he had caused by his conduct, Parsifal sank weeping to the ground; for this was his first grief, and his first consciousness of his own part in the life of another human being. Kundry, having thus awakened the youth's emotions, now sought by her seductive arts to lure him into the toils of passion; and, offering him the comforts of love, bestowed on him his first lover's kiss.

But at this, Parsifal sprang to his feet, pressing his hand to his heart, for it seemed to him that the wound of Amfortas burned there; and the thought of the wounded King's urgent need recalled his wandering senses to the great mission he had undertaken. In that critical moment, his nature seemed to change, for, in a flash, world-knowledge had come to him, and he realised the great truth of redemption by grace, and understood that he, by conquering temptation, could become worthy of bringing salvation to the stricken King, whose sufferings had awakened sweet pity within his heart.

The temptress never ceased her wily arts for a moment, and the youth felt more and more the pangs of guilty desires and passions burning within him; but when she again encircled him in her sensuous embrace, and pressed a second long kiss upon his

heated brow, he was awakened to the full consciousness of his danger, and repulsed her with horror. Then, having triumphed over the desires of the flesh, Parsifal gazed upwards towards the heavens with such rapt ecstasy upon his face, that Kundry was filled with remorse, and looked upon him with awe and wonder; then, fancying she beheld in him the Saviour of the world, Whom she had mocked as He lay upon the Cross, she sank at his feet, telling the whole terrible story of her everlasting sufferings, beseeching him to be pitiful to her and grant her the joy of being his, if but for one hour only. But Parsifal sternly replied that he would be condemned everlastingly with her, if even for one hour he forgot his holy mission.

Finally, as her last effort, the temptress sought to ensnare him by declaring that her kiss had awakened in him world-wide knowledge and vision, and that in her love he might reach unto Godhead and Omnipotence; but this subtle suggestion Parsifal resisted also, remaining true to his own pure and noble nature, and refusing to be enticed from the path of duty and mercy which he now so clearly recognised.

Then Kundry, finding that all arts and lures were on vain, sprang furiously from his side, cursing him, and calling loudly upon her wicked master to avenge her wrongs; for never before had any man been able

to resist her offers of love.

The sorcerer immediately appeared on the battlements of the Enchanted Castle, bearing aloft the holy spear; and, casting this with rage at the youth, he at the same time set forth his evil spells to work

destruction upon his defier.

But his magic was powerless when brought into contact with purity and faith; and the holy spear remained hanging in the air over Parsifal's head, until the noble youth seized it in his hand, and solemnly made the sign of the Cross with it. Instantly the Enchanted Castle fell to the ground, shaken by a violent earthquake; the beautiful garden was

changed to a desert once more; and as Kundry sank to the ground with a cry of woe, Parsifal hastened from the place of his temptation, triumphantly bearing aloft the sacred spear, with which he was now to

conquer the hostile races of the world.

For many years Parsifal wandered forth alone: and then at last, when grown to perfect manhood by suffering and sorrow, he returned to the domains of the Holy Grail. Here he was gladly welcomed one morning by the knight, Gurnemanz, now grown to be a very old man, who had taken up his abode in the forest, and become a hermit; and he learned from the old man that most of the Grail Knights had gradually left the Sanctuary, because Amfortas, in his agony of body and mind, had refused to perform the life-preserving office of revealing the Holy Grail. which had formerly given them such wonderful nourishment and power. Thus the strength of the noble knights had dwindled and faded; and the aged King Titurel had already died, for, deprived of the nourishment of the Grail, he could no longer live.

On hearing this sad news, Parsifal was overcome with sorrow, knowing that he had been the cause of this long-drawn-out woe, because he had for so many long years neglected to bring the salvation that lay in his power. But Gurnemanz comforted him, declaring that the suffering King should now be restored, since the only cure for his wound was at last nigh at hand; and he then invited Parsifal to go with him to the Sanctuary that day, since it was Good Friday, and Amfortas was expected to reveal the Holy Grail once again at the funeral service of the dead King Titurel.

Whilst the old and the young knight talked thus together, a female figure had come forth from the hermit's hut close by, and, drawing slowly nearer, had stood beside them with bowed head and humble mien. This was Kundry, who, in her wild witchmaiden form, Gurnemanz had that morning found in the forest, wrapped in the usual deep slumber, into

which she had sunk upon being released from the influence of the sorcerer, Klingsor; and, having gently revived her, the good old man had permitted her to perform for him the menial services she ever did at such times. Now approaching Parsifal, she humbly and tenderly washed his feet, anointing them with the contents of a golden vial she drew from her bosom; seeming as though, by such an act of service she would atone for the evil she had formerly tried to work to his soul. Old Gurnemanz then took the vial from her, and poured the remainder of its contents over the head of Parsifal, saluting him afterwards as King and Saviour; and the young knight. filling his hand with water from the sacred spring close by, very gently sprinkled it over the bent head of Kundry, as she knelt at his feet, thus baptising the poor sinner as his first act as the bringer of Salvation.

Gurnemanz now brought forth from the hut the rich scarlet mantle of the Grail Knight, with which he and Kundry proceeded to invest Parsifal over the shining armour which he wore; and then the three very solemnly bent their steps towards the holy castle

and entered the Sanctuary.

Here the knights who still remained were gathered beside the bier of the dead King Titurel, waiting for the Holy Grail to be revealed to them; but Amfortas, whose agony was now even greater than ever, and who passionately longed for death, again refused to perform his holy office, and, rising from his litter in a mad frenzy of pain and despair, tore the covering from his wounded side, and wildly implored his faithful companions to plunge their swords into his heart, and thus end his woe.

As the knights drew back in alarm at this outburst, Parsifal stepped forward with noble and calm dignity, and gently touched the suffering King's open wound with the sacred spear that alone had power to cure it; and at the touch of the holy weapon, Amfortas felt his pains vanish, and his wound close. and, knowing that he was now restored and forgiven, he fell upon his knees in an ecstasy of grati-

tude and praise.

Parsifal now assumed the office of King, which was henceforth his right; and, uncovering the long-unrevealed Holy Grail, he waved it solemnly before the kneeling knights. The Sanctuary was gradually flooded with the dazzling purple light that glowed from the sacred vessel, in the midst of which a white dove was seen to slowly descend from the dome; and as the holy bird hovered over the head of the rapt Parsifal, the witch-maiden, Kundry, sank dying to the ground, at last released from the doom of evil by the noble knight who had been strong enough to resist her wiles.

Thus was the sacred spear restored to the Sanctuary of the Holy Grail, and salvation brought to its guardians by the "Blameless Fool," the true and simple one, whose purity and faith had overcome temptation, and whose awakened pity for the sufferings of others had revealed the real spirit of brotherly love.

It will be plain to all that the story of "Parsifal" is an allegory, and that the incidents and characters of the piece are symbolic of human development, of the conquest of good over evil, and of the revivified spirit soaring triumphant above the baser instincts

that struggle to draw it back.

Amfortas represents suffering and guilty humanity. The body of humanity, grievously wounded by the throbbing, burning poison of sin, can only be healed by the restoration of the Genius of Good, which is symbolised by the spear, which has obtained mastery over the powerful spirits of evil. Klingsor represents everything opposed to Goodness and Loving-kindness, being the mainspring and source of all evil. Kundry, the instrument subject to the power of the instigator of ill, signifies the temptations that beset the seeker after Truth—the evil moral law, which

the pilgrim can only resist with the strength which is given by purity and faith. Finally, Parsifal himself is typical of the Saviour of the world, the pure and blameless One, the Conqueror of Temptation, Whose pity and love for wounded, guilty humanity brought salvation to all, and by redemption threw open the way to eternal Life and Love.

MARITANA

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, when Charles II. was reigning in Spain, a wandering tribe of gipsies appeared in the romantic city of Madrid, and every day were to be seen in the streets and public squares, amusing the light-hearted populace

with their merry songs and dances.

With this tribe there came a beautiful young girl, named Maritana, who possessed a voice of wonderful charm and sweetness; and in a very short time the enchanting singing and fair looks of the pretty gipsymaiden had won the hearts of all. Every day Maritana sang and danced before delighted crowds; and even the Queen, as she drove by with her ladies, would stop her state carriage to listen for a few moments to the pretty Gitana's thrilling voice.

Now, when the gay young King of Spain, Charles II., beheld Maritana for the first time he was so struck with her dazzling beauty that he determined to see her again; and several times he went disguised into the streets of the city, mingling with the crowds that applauded the gipsy-maid, in order to gain

acquaintance with her.

On one of these occasions he was seen and recognised, in spite of his disguise, by the Chief Minister of State, Don Jose de Santarem, and this wily nobleman, understanding at once that his royal master was infatuated with the charms of the fair Maritana, quickly decided, in order to serve his own ends, to do all in his power to aid the King in his pursuit of the maiden.

For a long while Don Jose had secretly loved the

cold and stately Queen, whom the pleasure-loving King had already begun to neglect; but so far, all his efforts to gain her favour had proved in vain, for the proud, exalted lady refused even to smile upon him. But the sight of the disguised King paying court to the pretty gipsy gave rise to a sudden scheme in the busy brain of the unscrupulous Minister. He would encourage this temporary infatuation, and convert Maritana to the purposes of the King's unrestrained passion; and then, once the Queen was persuaded of her husband's faithlessness, might she not be persuaded to look for a lover herself, as a means of avenging her wrongs? And that lover should be Don Jose de Santarem!

Fully determined to carry out this base plan, Don Jose himself went up to Maritana and began to make pretty speeches to her, praising her beauty and lovely voice; and having observed that the disguised King had slipped gold into her hand, he also gave her a piece of money of the same value, and begged her to sing him another song. Delighted at gaining two pieces of gold in one day, Maritana was glad enough to sing, and when the song came to an end she talked merrily to the Minister, telling him that she longed to be a great lady and to live in dazzling halls, drive in a gilded coach, and wear fine clothes and glittering jewels.

Pleased to find that his intended victim had just such longings and ambitions as would serve him in his schemes regarding her. Don Jose declared that all these things she desired might indeed be hers, since her own wondrous beauty could easily win them; and he added that if she would trust her fortunes to him, he would quickly make her a great lady.

Maritana merrily replied that she would gladly

accept any such good fortune he might offer her; and then she ran off to sing and dance in another street. No sooner had she gone out of the square than a

handsome, but dissipated-looking roysterer, whose once gay garments and general appearance showed signs of poverty and riotous living, and yet who preserved a certain dignity and charm of manner, issued forth from a tavern close by, declaring to the bystanders that he had just lost his last coin to gamblers; and Don Jose, to his surprise, recognised in this shabby, yet débonnaire stranger, an old friend of his boyhood's days, Don Cæsar de Bazan, a nobleman of equal rank with himself.

He went up at once and renewed acquaintance with him, and Don Cæsar, who was of a sunny-hearted, careless disposition, related to his old friend the reasons for his present poverty, declaring candidly that gay living and generosity to friends had quickly run through the fine fortune he had inherited, and that in order to escape from his numerous creditors, he was compelled to travel about from place to place.

As it was now some years since he had been in Madrid, he asked if there was any news in the city; and Don Jose replied "None; except that the King has issued an edict against duelling, declaring that every survivor of a duel shall be shot, unless it take place in Holy Week, when he is to be hanged instead."

Now Don Cæsar was an expert duellist, and celebrated for the number of his encounters; so on hearing this news, he said with a laugh and shrug of his shoulders: "Why, then, I must avoid a quarrel, for it is Holy Week now, and it would be a dire dishonour for the last of my race to be hanged!"

At this moment there was a loud outcry, and a boatman rushed into the square, dragging with him a wretched youth whom he had just rescued from attempting to drown himself; and close upon his heels followed the Captain of the Guard, into whose hands he was about to deliver the culprit to be brought up for justice.

But the poor boy, whose name was Lazarillo, begged wildly to be set free, declaring that a harsh master's ill-treatment had made him long to destroy himself, but that he would make no more attempts

if he could be saved from punishment; and on hearing his pitiful story and sad cries, Don Cæsar, who had a tender and generous heart, hastened to his assistance

and freed him from his captor.

The Captain of the Guard angrily commanded this unexpected champion to instantly deliver the boy up to justice, that he might be punished for his offence; but Don Cæsar, indignant at being thus addressed by one whom he deemed his inferior, drew his sword and haughtily declared that he meant to protect the

helpless youth.

A hot quarrel now ensued, and a few minutes later the two were engaged in a duel, despite Don Jose's repeated warnings about the King's edict, and the special penalty of Holy Week. Don Cæsar, with a few skilful strokes, easily despatched his adversary; but before he had time to escape to a place of safety he was surrounded and captured by the city guards, who quickly bore him off to the prison-house. Here he was thrown into a cell, together with the poor youth whose cause he had championed so recklessly, and who now refused to leave him; and having thus flagrantly gone against the King's edict, he was immediately condemned to death, and sentenced to be hanged next morning at seven o'clock.

Now Don Jose de Santarem, instead of being grieved at the terrible misfortune that had befallen the friend of his boyhood, at first cared naught about the matter; and then, suddenly seeing in this very incident a means of helping on his own evil schemes, he determined to make a strange offer to the doomed man. If only he could wed the beautiful Gitana to Don Cæsar de Bazan within the next few hours, all his plans would go well; for as the widow of a Grandee of Spain, Maritana would be entitled to a high position at Court, and thus be brought into daily contact with the King, who would then be constantly

under the spell of her fascinating beauty.

Having carefully laid his plans with great cunning, the wily Minister repaired to the prison-house

at five o'clock next morning; and armed with all authority as the King's Chief Minister, he made his way to the Count's cell, and entered. He found Don Cæsar already awake and talking cheerfully to the young Lazarillo in his usual gay and careless manner, quite regardless of his quickly-approaching end; and hurrying forward, he greeted him pleasantly, saying he had come to serve him.

Don Cæsar replied merrily that there was little in which a dying man could be served, but he added that he should be glad if the Minister would take the boy, Lazarillo, into his service, as he felt an interest in his fate. Don Jose readily agreed to this, and next he cunningly asked if the Count were satisfied to die the death of a dog by hanging—the death meted out to

outcasts and low-born rogues.

The haughty family pride of Don Cæsar was stung by this subtle taunt, for it was galling to him beyond measure to thus bring disgrace upon his ancient name, and he eagerly besought his old friend to entreat the King to grant him the privilege of being shot instead of hanged, as befitted a noble of Spain.

Then Don Jose announced that he could quickly obtain him this favour, but only on condition that he married before his execution, and that he asked no questions whatever about his bride, who would be thickly veiled; and Don Cæsar, glad to secure a soldier's death even upon such strange terms as these, willingly agreed, and at once retired to a small inner chamber to dress himself in the handsome wedding garments the Minister had already ordered to be brought there. He also requested that his guards and executioners might be permitted to join him in his last meal; and Don Jose, delighted at the success of his scheme, at once gave orders for a fine feast to be served immediately, after which he hurried away to find Maritana.

Just as he was leaving the prison, a sealed packet was handed to him, and opening it, he found that it was a free pardon for Don Cæsar from the King. Knowing that this unexpected circumstance would spoil all his fine plans, the merciless Minister determined that the pardon should not arrive at the prison until after the execution, and thrusting the document within the folds of his tunic, to be forwarded later, he went on his way.

Although still so early in the morning, he soon found Maritana already singing gaily amidst the gipsy camp; and drawing her to one side, he whispered that he had come to offer her a splendid position, a fine house, and great riches, on condition that she agreed to be married immediately to a high-born

noble of Spain, Don Cæsar de Bazan.

On hearing that such a brilliant marriage, which more than fulfilled her highest ambitions, was in store for her, Maritana clapped her hands joyfully; for though she had seen the capture of Don Cæsar the day before, and had even pleaded for his release, she had not heard his name spoken, and knew naught of his death-sentence; but when Don Jose added that for certain State reasons he could not explain to her she must go through the ceremony thickly veiled, and not behold her bridegroom until some days afterwards, she grew suspicious, and said she did not like such mystery.

Then the cunning Minister, to relieve her fears, said that it was the express command of the Queen that she should go through this ceremony and obey all his directions, however strange they might seem; and on hearing this, Maritana, who was grateful to the Queen for noticing her singing in the streets, now willingly gave her consent, thinking that even such an unusual marriage as this must be right if it was the royal lady's command. So she allowed herself to be dressed in a wedding robe, and so heavily veiled as to be completely blind-folded; and as soon as she was ready, Don Jose took her to the prison-house, together with a priest.

It was now about six o'clock; and they found Don Cæsar already carousing merrily with the very soldiers who were to shoot him an hour later. doomed man was quite in his usual good spirits, and determined to enjoy the last minutes of his life; but the boy, Lazarillo, was sad, and refused to join in the feast. Such a strong feeling of gratitude and love for his generous, light-hearted protector had sprung up within the youth's heart that he could not bear to think of his quickly-approaching death, and he longed to discover some means of saving him. he gazed helplessly round the prison chamber, his eyes fell upon the file of arquebuses leaning against the wall, with which the fatal volley was presently to be fired; and at the sight of the dreaded weapons, a sudden thought flashed across his quick brain. Creeping quietly along to the arquebuses, he dexterously managed to extract all the bullets, unnoticed by any of the merry feasters; and then, delighted with his clever trick, he awaited an opportunity to whisper to the intended victim what he had done.

When the Minister entered the room with the trembling, veiled Maritana, the revellers received them with gay acclamations, and quickly the bride and bridegroom were led to the prison chapel to be married. Neither could behold the other, because of the thick veil that enveloped Maritana; but Don Cæsar inwardly felt that his mysterious bride must be charming and fair to look upon, for several long locks of bright hair managed to escape the folds of her scarf, the hand she placed in his was small and

soft, and her voice was full of music.

And Maritana also was thrilled at the touch and voice of Don Cæsar, and when after the ceremony she was hurried away by the exultant Don Jose, she longed for the time to come when she should see her husband face to face, for the cunning Minister had told her nothing of Don Cæsar's doom, but led her to suppose that she would see him very soon.

The hour had now arrived for Don Cæsar's execution, and he went forth to his mock death with a gay heart, for by this time Lazarillo had told him of his tampering with the arquebuses, and he knew that all would be well with him. But he decided to go through the whole performance just as though the guns were properly charged, knowing that this was the only means by which he might yet escape; so, though inwardly full of mirth, he bade a sorrowful farewell to all around him, and when the volley was fired, fell to the ground at once, feigning death.

The executioners did not approach to examine the supposed corpse, but returned to the prison immediately; and when they had gone, the bold Don Cæsar calmly got up and walked away! Having thus escaped with his life, he determined to find his mysterious bride and hurry from Madrid before recapture became possible; but as, knowing nothing of the pardon that had been accorded him, he dared not show himself in daylight, he kept in hiding until evening, when he issued forth cautiously in search of Lazarillo, whom he knew would now be in the service of the Minister.

Now Don Jose had laid all his plans with great skill; and knowing that a certain dependent of his, the Marquis de Montefiori, upon whom he had bestowed a remunerative appointment, was holding a grand reception that evening, he decided that Maritana should be introduced to this assembly as the Marquis's niece. Accordingly, when evening fell, he repaired with the gipsy-girl, splendidly attired, to the festive scene, and taking her into an ante-room off the salon where the guests were being received, he sent for the Marquis, and informed him that Maritana was his (the Mar-

quis's) long-lost niece.

"But I have no niece," exclaimed the puzzled

Marquis.

"Pardon me, but I say that this lady, the Countess de Bazan, is your long-lost niece!" repeated Don Jose firmly. "And you must introduce her to your guests as such!"

On hearing this, the Marquis—a weak, foolish person, completely the tool of Don Jose, who made use

of him for various unscrupulous purposes—pretended to suddenly remember his new-found relation, seeing that the Minister desired him to do so, and after welcoming her with exaggerated effusiveness, he led the bewildered Maritana to the salon beyond to be introduced to his wife and the assembly as his long-lost niece.

Don Jose was just about to follow, when a stranger, muffled in the robe of a monk, suddenly entered the ante-room; and to his surprise and dismay, he quickly recognised the handsome features of Don Cæsar de Bazan! Alarmed at this unexpected appearance of the man he had hoped and believed was dead, the Minister tremblingly asked how he came to be alive; and Don Cæsar gaily related the story of Lazarillo's trick, and of his own feigned death, adding: "And now I have come to demand my wife, the Countess de Bazan, who, I have been told, is here!"

For a moment Don Jose was nonplussed, knowing that if the bold Count took Maritana away now, his own base schemes with regard to the Queen would fall to the ground; but quickly thinking out a plan of escape, he sought the Marchioness de Montesiori, and bringing her into the ante-room, introduced her with much ceremony to Don Cæsar as the Countess de

Bazan.

Now, the Marchioness was old, ugly, silly, and frivolous, and when Don Cæsar saw that he had been wedded to such an unattractive person, he was filled with disappointment and disgust, and gladly agreed to sign a contract suggested by the quick-witted Minister to relinquish his wife and quit Madrid for ever in exchange for a yearly sum of money paid in compensation.

Before the paper was signed, however, Maritana's voice was heard singing in the salon beyond; and instantly recognising the voice as that of his mysterious veiled bride, Don Cæsar, knowing now that he had been cheated, flung the pen away, and angrily declared that he would have his true wife at all costs.

At this moment a party of guests, with Maritana in their midst, entered from the salon; and knowing that all would be lost should the husband and wife meet face to face, Don Jose gave orders for the storming Count to be instantly arrested by the guards on duty, who dragged him off in triumph. At the same time, Maritana was seized and borne away also, that she might not behold the clamorous stranger; and seeing that she was now growing suspicious of her surroundings and treatment, Don Jose had her carried to a villa belonging to the King, close to the royal palace.

Here the young Gitana pined in lonely state for several days, guarded by the youth, Lazarillo; for although gorgeous attire and every luxury she could desire was heaped upon her, she felt that all was not

well, and that her position was a false one.

"You have made me a countess, and given me wealth and a costly palace, but where is my husband?" she exclaimed anxiously to Don Jose, when after a lapse of several days he at last visited her; and the Minister replied with a triumphant wave of the hand towards the door: "He is here!"

At the same moment, the King of Spain entered the room; for Don Jose had kept his royal master fully acquainted with his movements regarding Maritana, and had now brought him to this gilded prison to amuse himself with the beautiful captive, whose fas

cinations had so completely enthralled him.

Having thus ensured, as he hoped, the accomplishment of the poor girl's dishonour, Don Jose went off to seek an interview with the neglected Queen, whom he now expected to convince of her husband's infidelity; but before departing, he gave strict orders to Lazarillo to permit no one to enter the villa, and to fire upon any intruder.

When the King entered her room, Maritana recognised him at once as the stranger who had admired her in the streets, and the knowledge of his true identity suddenly flashing upon her at the same time,

she drew back in surprise and alarm; but Charles advanced eagerly, and taking her hand, began to pour forth passionate protestations of devotion, offering her dazzling prospects of wealth and luxury if only she would accept his love. But Maritana was pure, and seeing now into what danger she had been snared, she utterly disregarded the King's protestations, and endeavoured to restrain his advances; and presently she was greatly relieved at a sudden interruption—a shot that sounded from the entrance to the villa.

The King quickly hurried her into the next chamber, and on returning to the salon, found himself face to face with the intruder, who had now made his

entry through the window.

This was none other than Don Cæsar de Bazan, who, having gained his freedom (the Chief Minister having no power to detain him owing to the King's pardon), had come to demand his wife once more, having learnt that she was shut up within this very villa; but on finding a stranger in the salon, he was greatly surprised and alarmed, especially when Lazarillo (who had followed him into the room, and recognised him with delight) in a whisper informed him that this stranger was the King of Spain. However, in spite of the difficulties he foresaw, the bold Count determined to rescue his unknown bride from the false position in which she had been placed, and to save his own name from dishonour; and addressing the King as a stranger, he serenely demanded his name.

Charles, having no idea of the true identity of his questioner, and thinking only of shielding himself from scandal, answered in a haughty tone: "I am Don Cæsar de Bazan! And pray, who are you?"

Instantly Don Cæsar, whose keen wit and happy resourcefulness never deserted him for a moment, replied promptly: "Oh Signor, if you are Don Cæsar de Bazan, why, then, I am Charles, King of Spain!"

The King was so much amused at the quick-witted boldness of the intruder (whom he soon gathered to be the real Don Cæsar), that for a short time he kept up the farce; but on seeing that he was known in spite of the name he had taken, he was just about to order Don Cæsar's arrest, when Lazarillo appeared again, saying that a messenger had arrived from the palace, where His Majesty's presence was immediately required.

Full of impatience at this second interruption to his love-making, the King hurried from the room; and no sooner had he gone than Maritana entered, drawing back at the sight of another stranger. But Don Cæsar, knowing that he was at last face to face with his bride, and full of joy on beholding her wonderful beauty and charm, hurried forward with outstretched arms, and explaining rapidly that he was her own true husband, he declared that they should never more be parted.

And when Maritana heard the rich voice of Don Cæsar she instantly recognised it as that of the unseen bridegroom with whom she had knelt at the altar; and since their love was mutual, the husband and

wife embraced with great joy.

Maritana now begged her husband to seek an interview with the Queen, whom she had observed walking in the palace gardens close by, and to induce her to intercede on their behalf; and when he had gone, she knelt at the window to pray for his success.

A short time after, the King returned to the salon, having despatched his business at the palace; and he was immediately followed by Don Cæsar, who looked greatly disturbed, and began to tell a strange story in

excited tones.

He declared that he had entered the palace gardens to seek an interview with the Queen, when on approaching some thick bushes he had heard the sound of voices from the other side, and on drawing nearer, had observed Don Jose de Santarem in close conversation with the Queen. "Your Majesty is being deceived," the Chief Minister was saying, "for the King meets his new charmer in yonder villa to-night!

He next had declared his own passion to the Queen, and had begged her to accept him as a lover in order to avenge herself on the faithless King; but the royal lady had indignantly refused to listen to him, scorning the love he offered. Furious at this proof of the baseness and treachery of the trusted Minister, Don Cæsar had then sprung forward and challenged him to fight, and in a few moments Don Jose had fallen, to rise no more.

Now when the young King thus learnt how nobly his honour had been upheld by the very man whose own good name he was seeking to destroy, he felt heartily ashamed of the unworthy part he had just played; and immediately relinquishing all pursuit of Maritana, he appointed Don Cæsar to the Governorship of the wealthy province of Valentia, as a mark of

his gratitude and regard.

So the base designs of the unscrupulous Minister were at last brought to naught; and Don Cæsar de Bazan, restored to favour and a high position, retired with honour to Valentia to live in great happiness with his beautiful bride, Maritana.

LURLINE

BENEATH the billows of the great Rhine River dwelt the King of the Water Spirits, Rhineberg the Powerful, for whom the gnomes of the under-world and the sea had gathered together wonderful treasures of gold and jewels, such as were not even dreamed of by mortals; and here in his palace of crystal and pearl he held a mighty sway.

It was a merry court he held; for his beautiful daughter, Lurline, the fairest of all the river nymphs, loved to dance upon the sparkling floors with her attendant nymphs, and to sing to the music of the

flowing waves.

But at last there came a change, and Lurline was merry no longer. One evening, as the fair nymph rested upon the Lurlei-berg, a rock that jutted over a whirlpool, playing upon her harp and singing the thrilling song of enchantment with which she lured her mortal victims to destruction at the bidding of her powerful spirit father, a handsome young nobleman named Rudolph sailed by in an airy skiff; and as Lurline gazed upon the exquisite beauty of this youth, a passionate love for him grew up in her heart, and, dropping her harp just as her song had begun to enthral him, she could no longer bear to lure him to his doom.

After this she grew sad, and sighed for the Count Rudolph with every breath; and when the Rhine King knew that his daughter loved a mortal, he was filled with dismay and anger. Finding, however, that in spite of his reproaches Lurline could not forget the beautiful youth she had seen, he gave her permission 508

to seek him out in his own home, hoping that she would quickly discover mortal love to be but a frail. unworthy thing, and would then renounce it; and the water maiden gladly availed herself of her father's permission, and went forth to seek her earthly lover.

Meanwhile, the young Count Rudolph was passing through a time of difficulty and trouble; for, having spent his wealth on the gay pleasures of youth, he had no longer the necessary means to keep up proper state in his ancient castle home. Thinking to mend his fortunes by making a wealthy marriage, he began to pay his addresses to Lady Ghiva, the daughter of an old Baron, whom he believed to be very rich, but who was in reality quite as poor as himself; and his court was acceptable to the haughty Ghiva, who had long cherished admiration and affection for the handsome youth, believing him also to be rich enough to satisfy all her wants.

When, however, at a festive ball given by the Baron in his honour, Rudolph laid his heart at her feet, but declared that he had no great wealth to offer her, the disappointed lady refused him with disdain, and Rudolph returned to his castle in chagrin. His merry companions, however, sought to cheer his drooping spirits with lively songs and revelry; but Rudolph found comfort from another source.

There suddenly came into his thoughts the memory of that evening, when, as he rowed himself in his skiff upon the Rhine, he had heard the thrilling, enticing voice of a water nymph; and as the words of her sweet song now came back to him, he began to sing them to his companions, who listened to him in delight.

But soon their delight was changed into dismay; for as the young Count sang the words of this strange sweet song, Lurline herself suddenly appeared in the banqueting hall, as though in answer to his call.

The lovely water nymph at once approached Rudolph, and began to weave a spell of enchantment over him; and having placed a magic ring upon his finger as a talisman against all danger, she dis-

appeared as suddenly as she had come.

But her thrilling voice, singing to the accompaniment of a magic harp, could be heard calling from the river; and Rudolph, on recovering from the stupor into which he had been thrown, now became so violently enamoured of the beautiful nymph that he sprang from his seat and rushed down to the shore, following the sound of her luring song with ecstasy.

His friends, fearing that he was being enticed to destruction, endeavoured to check his impetuous course, and to hold him back from danger; but Rudolph, reckless of what lay before him, and intoxicated with the charm of the water maiden's irresistible song, flung all detaining hands from him, and plunged eagerly into the river. The waves of the Lurlei-berg whirlpool flowed over him, but were powerless to harm him, because of the magic ring he wore; and Lurline, full of joy, conveyed him to her own palace of corals, where they spent together a period of delirious happiness.

But one day Rudolph heard the voices of his old companions mourning his loss, as they sadly rowed overhead in their skiffs; and, longing to greet them once again, he begged the lovely Lurline to permit him to leave her for a few days, promising to return

to her.

Lurline, though fearful of being parted from the mortal lover she adored, yet could not bear to cause him pain by refusing his request; so she gave her consent, declaring that she would await his return at the end of three days on the Lurlei-berg.

Rudolph now desired to take back with him some of the lavish wealth he saw around him; and Lurline, having been given the keys of her father's treasurechambers during his temporary absence, took him

therein to take his fill.

As it happened, Rhineberg returned at that moment, and was enraged on discovering what the lovers were about; but when Lurline pleaded for pardon he could not resist her sweet charm, and ended by giving Rudolph vast treasures to take back with him to his castle.

The young Count then departed; and on his arrival at his home the news of his altered fortunes quickly spread. The Baron and his daughter Ghiva were now very anxious to encourage the suitor they had formerly rejected; and to them Rudolph revealed the secret of his newly-acquired wealth, showing them the magic ring he had received from Lurline, and singing the praises of the lovely water nymph so rapturously that the Baron's daughter was quickly filled with a consuming jealousy, and snatching the ring from his finger, furiously flung it into the midst of the river.

With the loss of the magic ring the spell of Lurfine departed also; and Rudolph, forgetful of his love for the fair nymph, began to find pleasure in the advances made by the cunning Ghiva, and to engage in

revellings and feastings once more.

In the meantime, fair Lurline sat upon the Lurleiberg rock, singing her sweet love-songs as she patiently awaited the return of the mortal she adored; but when one day a slave-gnome of her father's brought to her the magic ring which she had given to Rudolph, and which had been now found in the river, she could not help but believe her lover to be faithless.

Filled with woe, and yet enraged that her love should have been slighted by a mortal, she resolved to seek out Rudolph once more, and to reproach him for his faithlessness.

Accordingly, she appeared at a splendid festival which was being held on the banks of the Rhine, in honour of the young Count's birthday; and, quickly approaching Rudolph, she began to pour bitter reproaches upon him for deserting her loving arms for the sake of his mortal companions, some of whom, she informed him, were even now plotting his assassination that they might seize his treasures.

Her wrath, however, vanished when Rudolph explained how his magic ring had been taken from him by force, and declared that he still loved her with his whole heart; for the magic charm of her sweet presence had once more enveloped the young Count, and he felt that her love alone could satisfy the longings of his heart.

Meanwhile, his false companions, as he had been warned by Lurline, were even now hatching a plot to murder him and seize his wealth; and their plans were overheard by the Lady Ghiva and her father, who quickly informed Rudolph of his danger, and besought him to save his life by instant flight.

But the young Count declared that he would rather die by the side of his beloved Lurline than fly as a coward; and, boldly drawing his sword, he met his

enemies undaunted.

Then Lurline, knowing that her lover's life was in utmost danger, took up her harp, and sang a wild song of invocation to the Spirits of the Rhine, so that the noble river suddenly rose in a mighty flood, and immersed the would-be murderers.

When the waters had once more returned to their accustomed bounds, Rhineberg, the River King, appeared; and, to the great joy of the lovers, he now

gave his gracious consent to their union.

Thus did Lurline, the lovely Daughter of the Rhine, secure her heart's desire; and as she gazed into the eyes of her mortal lover, she knew that she had not lived in vain, since she had gained the greatest of all treasures—the jewel of Love.

COLONEL CHABERT

(Oberst Chabert)

Ir was summer-time in Paris; and late one night during the year 1817, lights still burned in the office of Derville, the famous lawyer, betokening that work was still proceeding in one spot of the gay city, in spite of the fact that thousands of pleasure-seekers paced the streets and filled the theatres, and that no reasonable person could possibly have the desire to be cooped up in a close room until midnight when the soft warm air of a June evening was to be en-

joved outside.

But Derville, the lawyer, was the fashion; and he had so many clients and so many interesting cases to conduct that his offices were often open until a late hour. Not that Derville himself was to be found there of an evening; for he was a young man, who, though clever and shrewd in his profession, yet desired to enjoy the good things of life and sought pleasure whilst he might. But his two clerks toiled on unceasingly, preparing deeds and documents against the return of their master at midnight, when they might retire to rest and Derville himself would take his turn, remaining up until early dawn to con the papers they had left for him.

Old Boucard, the elder clerk, would grumble now and again because of the late hours he was compelled to keep; but Godeschal, his companion, never complained, for he was an old soldier and afraid of no hardships. He was glad of the work to occupy his

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mind, after the troubles and vicissitudes he had been

through as a sergeant in Napoleon's army.

Napoleon was now in exile at St Helena; but though peaceful days were at present his lot, Godeschal oft looked back with regret to the stirring past and sighed for the days when he had fought side by side with Chabert, his beloved Colonel. How he had loved Chabert; and how grief-stricken he had been when the brave Colonel had fallen at the battle of Eylau!

Nor was he alone in his grief—for when the news of Colonel Chabert's death was brought to Paris, there was general grief for the loss of so gallant a man; and his fair young wife, Rosine, became the chief object of sympathy in Parisian society, and, later on, its

petted favourite.

In a very short time, however, Chabert was forgotten, and Rosine became the wife of the fascinating young Comte Ferraud, a peer of France. The pair had a deep love for one another; and when two children were born to them as the years went by, their happiness was complete.

And now, on this hot night in June, ten years after the battle of Eylau, their happiness was about to be

shattered.

For Chabert was not dead, as had been believed; and he was even now entering Derville's office, with the object of proving his identity and claiming his wife. He had been struck down at Eylau, fearfully wounded, and after the battle his unconscious body had been taken up for dead and cast into a huge grave or charnel pit with the other slain; but later, on recovering consciousness and realising his awful position, he had managed by almost superhuman efforts to free himself. Then, as he lay on the top of the ground, he had been found by a poor peasant woman, who gave him shelter in her hut until his wounds were healed.

Better for him would it have been had he never effected so miraculous an escape from burial alive, for when at length, after many weary months, he went forth to tell his tale and seek assistance to return to his wife and home, no one would believe his story, and all laughed to scorn the idea that the gaunt, disfigured and ragged beggar before them could be the gallant Chabert, whom they knew to

have been slain and buried at Eylau.

Stunned by the helplessness of his position, Chabert lost his senses for a time, and was locked up in a mad-house for declaring himself to be the dead Colonel; and then, finally securing his release by giving up his claim and calling himself instead Hyacinth the Beggar, he began to wander on foot through many towns and country wilds, frequently writing letters to his wife imploring her aid on his behalf, to none of which he received any reply.

Many further disasters fell upon him, for he was often imprisoned as a vagabond, since no one would believe his tale or give him help; but, at last, after ten years' weary wanderings, he earned sufficient money to enable him to make his way back to Paris—there to learn the despairing news that his beloved Rosine was now the happy wife of another

man.

Though full of grief at this additional crushing blow, Chabert yet determined to establish his identity at all costs, and to claim his wife; and for this purpose he sought the assistance of the most famous

lawyer in Paris.

Nearly a dozen times that day had he called at the offices of Derville, only to find the great man absent, or engaged; and when he finally appeared again as midnight was about to strike, old Boucard was highly indignant, and wished to deny him admission, since he did not approve of his wild and wretched looks and his beggarly garments.

Godeschal, however, was interested in the stranger, and bade him enter; and as the haggard client came forward with feverish eagerness, the ex-sergeant stared at him curiously, trying to chase some elusive recollection as to where he had seen those scarred

and worn features before, since he felt sure the man was no stranger to him, though he could not yet place him in his book of memory. His musings, however, were cut short by the entrance of Derville, who sent both clerks into an adjoining room, and sat down at once to interview his strange client.

No sooner did the ragged late-comer declare himself to be the famous Chabert so long believed to be dead, than the young lawyer became intensely interested; for the beautiful Comtesse Rosine, the supposed widow of Chabert and the wife of Comte Ferraud, was also his client, and one of the most fascinating of his many lady admirers. He, therefore, invited the unhappy man before him to tell him his whole story; and by the time the heart-rending recital had come to an end, he felt entirely convinced that the stranger was indeed the Chabert who had been mourned as dead.

At this moment, Godeschal entered to inform his master that the Comtesse Rosine had unexpectedly arrived and desired an immediate interview; and upon hearing that his beloved one was about to enter the room, Chabert became violently agitated, forgetting, for the instant, that she was now the wife of another man, and only longing to clasp her in his arms.

Derville, however, though now more than ever satisfied as to the truth of the story which had been told to him, thrust Chabert into an adjoining chamber, bidding him to possess himself in patience a little while longer; and then he gave orders for the Comtesse to be admitted, at the same time scolding Godeschal for staring after the mysterious ragged stranger—for the old sergeant had started violently on hearing the raised voice of Chabert, and it had brought back to him a flood of recollections. Half dazed, he admitted the Comtesse Rosine, retiring from the room as she entered; and Derville turned readily to receive his beautiful client, kissing her hand with his usual charming courtesy and leading her to a seat.

That Rosine was agitated, he could easily perceive; and though she began her interview by an attempted flirtation with the handsome young lawyer, Derville skilfully evaded her advances and led her to relate her troubles to him.

He was not greatly surprised to learn that Chabert was the cause of her late visit; and he soon discovered that, though terrified. Rosine desired him to believe that she was merely annoyed by the threats of a blackmailer. She declared that an impostor calling himself Chabert had written to her many letters, in which he claimed to be her first husband who had had a wonderful escape from death and burial; and she added that this person had now come to Paris and begun to haunt her house.

Derville's quick brain instantly realised that the Comtesse secretly believed the so-called impostor to be indeed her first husband, since she had, doubtless, recognised his handwriting on the letters, but that she was determined to refuse to acknowledge his identity; and the truth of his surmise was instantly forthcoming, for Chabert, unable to restrain himself longer, now burst into the room, and seizing Rosine's trembling hands in his, greeted her as his wife in passionate tones of love.

Rosine turned deadly pale, and, thus taken unawares, unconsciously proved to the watchful Derville the identity of Chabert by her instant shrinking away from his embrace, and by the hoarse murmur of his name under her breath; but the next moment, full of despair at the thought of losing her beloved Ferraud, she passionately denounced him as an impostor and utterly repudiated the idea that she had

ever beheld him before.

Chabert, crushed again by her unexpected denial of him, feverishly recounted to her all that he had done for her in the past-how he had found her, an orphaned, destitute young girl, on the banks of the Seine, about to drown herself; how he had saved her, and, loving her from the first, had married her; and

how, until the time of his departure to the wars, he had loaded her with every kindness and sought noth-

ing but her happiness.

To all this, Rosine still stubbornly refused to admit any confirmation whatever; but, in spite of her repudiation, undeniable proof of the stranger's indentity was again accorded by the sudden entry of old Godeschal, who, full of emotion, flung himself at the feet of Chabert and tearfully addressed him as his beloved Colonel, whom he now completely recognised, in spite of his scars and haggard looks.

Finding herself thus defeated, Rosine uttered a distracted cry and rushed out of the office, determined to cling to her beloved Ferraud whilst she might; and when Chabert, now furious at her cruel denial of him, would have followed with intent to kill her, Derville held him back, and proceeded to calm his rage and to lay before him plans for his next action.

Meanwhile, Rosine reached her home, and passed a restless, anxious night, trying to seek a loophole from her terrible position. She dared not yet make any statement to Ferraud, without whose love she felt she could not exist; and next day, as she sat alone in one of the large palatial rooms of her beautiful home, she determined to make an appeal to Chabert himself to forego his claim, for she saw that he loved her still and selfishly thought that he might be willing to put her happiness before his own.

Elated by this idea, she was about to order her carriage and seek Chabert, when Derville entered

the room, unannounced.

Rosine, though last evening willing enough to win to her side the handsome young lawyer by exercising her arts of fascination, now resented his intrusion; for she knew that he had never for an instant believed in her denial of Chabert's identity, that he even suspected her of further deceit, and she feared him accordingly. Her fears were well-founded; for Derville declared that he had come to acquaint the Comte Ferraud with the fact of her first husband's existence. Once again, Rosine indignantly denied that his ragged client of last night was Chabert; but, next moment, she was completely nonplussed by Derville calmly accusing her of having received all the imploring letters which Chabert had sent to her during his wretched wanderings, and of even having been in possession of his first communication before her marriage with Ferraud took place.

Closely the lawyer watched the effect of his accusing words upon the white face of Rosine; then, seeking a proof from herself of the truth of his assertion, he added mercilessly: "I have proof of all this!"

Rosine fell into his trap at once; for, knowing that he spoke the truth, she quickly determined to purchase his silence by the offer of gold, and drawing from her writing-table a bag containing a thousand louis d'or, she entreated him to take it and leave her in peace.

But Derville was not to be bought; and he sternly bade the agitated woman to put back her gold, declaring that though he had held no proof before of his suspicions, she had herself now revealed to him the truth of his accusation by her foolish attempt to

buy his silence.

The self-accused Rosine bowed her head in humiliation; but upon Ferraud's entry into the room at that moment, she still endeavoured to avert the blow she

knew must fall.

Ferrand, young, handsome, and full of gaiety, had brought in flowers from the garden for his beloved wife, whom he greeted tenderly, at the same time extending a hearty greeting to Derville; but soon realising that something was wrong, he demanded an explanation. In reply, Derville, ignoring Rosine's imploring glances, asked for an interview; and as the two men retired into Ferraud's study and closed the door, the distracted wife listened outside, with

her ear to the keyhole, for the words that should seal her doom.

She heard Derville relating the story of her first husband's return; and when the pair came out of the room, and the lawyer had departed to fetch Chabert, she hastened, sobbing, to Ferraud, who clasped her in his arms in a passionate embrace. To her joy, she found that Ferraud refused to believe the story he had been told; and the pair remained for a few happy minutes in their lovers' paradise, until interrupted by the return of Derville with Chabert and the faithful ex-sergeant, Godeschal, who refused to leave his newly-found and well-beloved Colonel, fearing lest some conspiracy might be made against his life.

Ferraud met the newcomers with dignity, and haughtily challenged Chabert to substantiate his claim to be the famous Colonel of whose death and burial definite reports had been received and believed; and upon Rosine again doggedly repudiating the fact that the changed man before them was indeed her first husband, old Godeschal sprang forward and furiously denounced the unhappy woman as a traitress, accusing her of having been in possession of Chabert's first letter announcing his escape before she was married to the Comte Ferraud

Derville, out of pity for the harassed wife, had withheld the latter information from Ferraud, who was thunderstruck on hearing the terrible words of Godeschal; and seizing Rosine's hands in an agitated grip, he commanded her to answer on oath that the accusation was false. In vain Rosine, half-fainting, endeavoured to utter the words of denial that Ferraud longed to hear; but, conscience-stricken, she could not swear on oath that which she knew to be untrue, and, with bowed head, she now admitted that the returned stranger was indeed her first husband, Chabert, and that she had known him to be alive on the very day on which she had been married to Ferraud.

She entreated the latter to forgive her, since her deep love for him had been the reason for her guilty silence; but Ferraud, crushed by the blow which must lay his family honour and pride in the dust, and furious at the deception which had been practised upon him, flung the weeping Rosine into the arms of Chabert, announcing to the latter that he thus restored to him all that he had unwittingly robbed him of.

The wretched Rosine entreated him not to cast her off, again declaring her love for him; but Ferraud, though moved by her grief, rushed out into the open air, and Chabert and his despairing wife were left alone.

Rosine, half-dazed, remained silent for a long time; and then, on awakening to the full realisation of her awful position, she pleaded passionately to Chabert to resign his claim to her and to declare himself an impostor. Presently seeing her two children by Ferraud approaching, she called them in, fondling them with loving embraces, and, tearfully bewailing the dishonour that must fall upon their innocent heads should her own unhappy story become known, she entreated once more to be recognised as their father's wife.

Chabert was deeply moved at the sight of the pretty children; and Rosine, perceiving this, now used her last shaft and declared boldly that she had never loved him, but that her regard for him in the past had been merely gratitude for his kindness to her, and that the real love of her life had been given to Ferraud, the father of her children.

Entirely crushed by thus realising that his deep faithful love had never been returned, Chabert staggered from the room for a few moments to recover his senses; and Rosine seized the opportunity to take out from a secret drawer in her writing-desk a phial containing a deadly poison, determining to swallow it and die rather than be compelled to leave her beloved Ferraud.

Ere the poison reached her lips, however, Chabert returned, and seeing what she was about to do, snatched the phial from her trembling hand and thrust it into his breast pocket.

Rosine, baulked in her purpose, repeated again the cruel statement that she had never loved any man but Ferraud; and then taking her children by the hand, she hurried with them from the room.

Chabert, left alone, became a prey to the gloomiest thoughts; and, completely broken as he realised the fact that Rosine had never loved him, but that he must himself yet love her to the end of his days, he determined to go back to the oblivion of death and thus interfere with her happiness no more. Deliberately, he sat at the desk and wrote a note, in which he declared himself to be an impostor who had posed as Chabert for blackmailing purposes, but who was in reality merely Hyacinth the Beggar; and then, feeling for his pistol, he stepped out into the garden, cautiously hiding himself behind the bushes and keeping from the sight of the watchful Godeschal.

Meanwhile, Rosine had met with Ferraud once more, and had implored him again not to cast her off, but to keep her story from public knowledge for the sake of their children; but Ferraud, though deeply suffering himself, gently but firmly declared that his honour could only be satisfied by restoring to

Chabert his rightful position.

Just then, a pistol shot rang out from the garden; and, fearing the worst, Derville and Godeschal, followed by Ferraud, hastened outside to look for Chabert, whose body they found amongst the bushes,

slain by his own hand.

Reverently they bore the corpse into the house; and Rosine, horror-struck at the tragedy, was overcome with grief and remorse as she now realised that Chabert had died for love of her, and despairing because her own deceptions had alienated Ferraud's affections, she flung herself upon the prostrate body, and feeling for the phial of poison he had taken from

her, swallowed the contents, before Ferraud could

stay her hand.

Overcome with horror and grief, the Comte rushed forward to catch her swaying body as it fell; and Rosine, with Chabert's name on her lips, uttered a deep sigh and expired in his arms.

THE JEWELS OF THE MADONNA

(I Gioielli della Madonna)

Ir was the day of the Festival of the Madonna; and all the pleasure-loving folk of Naples had turned out to enjoy the holiday in honour of the event, quite early in the day taking up their stands in the best vantagegrounds, in order to get a good view of the great Church Procession and to join in the wild Carnival fun.

In one of the public squares facing the sea, a more than usually merry crowd had collected, to the great delight and amusement of old Biaso, the Scribe, and to the annoyance of young Gennaro, the blacksmith.

Old Biaso had brought his pens and paper to a table outside his mean little hut; and here he plied a busy trade, since many of the pretty girls in the crowd gladly gave him commissions to write loveletters for them to their various sweethearts.

Young Gennaro, however, found the boisterous crowd far from his liking, since he had no intention of joining in the Carnival pranks, and only desired to pursue his usual daily work in peace and quietness, having many disturbing thoughts to occupy his mind on this particular day.

For Gennaro was in love; and the object of his adoration was a wild, wilful maiden, whose beauty and charm enthralled him to distraction, but who could not be persuaded to look upon him in any other light than that of a brother—and as a brother, moreover, whose prudence and restraining authority she scorned.

The lovely Maliella longed for excitement and light

pleasures; and her high spirit resented the wise restraints imposed upon her by Gennaro and his worthy mother, Carmela, with whom she had lived since earliest childhood.

Only too well did Gennaro know this; and he was just now torn between his brotherly sense of duty in keeping the madcap girl from the temptations of frivolity, and his lover's longing to grant her every desire. The former had prevailed to-day, so far, his mother and he having determined to keep Maliella within doors, so that she might not be exposed to the careless licence of the Festival crowds: but as Gennaro plied his work outside the house, he knew that Carmela had her hands full in keeping the disappointed and angry girl occupied with the domestic tasks she abhorred. He was, therefore, more than usually irritated by the amusing cries of the street-venders and by the pandemonium that reigned supreme amongst the giddy holiday folk, who, however, cared nothing for the harassed looks of the pale youth who seemed so determined to work whilst they played.

In the distance, the church bells were ringing merrily, and the sound of singing proclaimed the fact that the great procession of the Madonna was already formed and parading the streets; and presently some gaily-decorated boats drew up to the quay and disembarked a number of pretty little boys decorated in festival clothes as Children of St. John, who were followed by little flower-girls garbed in white, all marching through the square to the accompaniment

of musical instruments.

The appearance of the children gave greater animation than ever to the scene; and most of the merrymakers followed in their wake to join the approach-

ing procession.

The square was thus left somewhat quieter for a short time; and Gennaro, at last overcome by his conflicting feelings, had just seized this opportunity of a peaceful moment to sink upon his knees beside the anvil and offer up a short prayer to the Virgin

for guidance in his dilemma, when the beautiful Maliella herself impetuously burst forth from the house beyond, closely followed by the distracted Carmela, who held in her hand a comb with which she had been endeavouring to straighten the girl's untidy locks.

But Maliella was in a rebellious mood and refused to allow her guardian to make her neat and presentable if her fair looks were to be kept hidden from the appreciative eyes of the outside world. She had roughly broken away from Carmela's restraining hands, and now appeared in the square with disordered dress and her jet-black hair streaming over her shoulders, calling out passionately:— "No! No! You shall not make me look fair for the benefit of my mirror only! I am beautiful, and I long for love and pleasure! This is a Festival Day, and I mean to enjoy myself with all these merry folk! I will be held in no longer!"

Shocked and pained, Gennaro ran to expostulate with the wilful girl, only to receive fiery words of scorn in reply; and in spite of his and Carmela's entreaties, Maliella flitted here and there about the square, sticking on her head a paper cap dropped by one of the holiday-makers, and, spurred on in her rebellion by the encouraging cheers of old Biaso and the lively youths who had now returned to behold the approach of the procession, she struck a coquettish attitude and called out audaciously:—"Here am I, young and pretty, and longing for kisses! Who

will oblige me?"

Instantly, there was a rush to seize the seductive and mischievous young beauty, all the youths being eager to accept her invitation; but Maliella merrily eluded them all and ran out of the square, only to be closely followed by her new admirers.

A band of Camorrists now appeared on the scene, headed by a handsome youth, Rafaele, their dashing leader; and quickly taking in the enticing situation,

they joined in the pursuit of the fair truant.

Gennaro sought comfort from his shocked and dismayed mother, from whom he learnt that Maliella had been adopted when a foundling baby by Carmela as a mark of her gratitude to the Virgin for having preserved the life of her beloved son when laid low by some childish complaint; and bidding him think no more about the unruly girl, Carmela advised him instead to seek guidance by praying before the approaching statue of the Madonna.

No sooner had Gennaro departed to join in the procession than Maliella appeared in the square once more, closely pursued by the handsome Camorrist leader, Rafaele, whose ardent nature had been instantly magnetised by her unusual beauty, and who was already in love with the pleasure-seeking girl, whose tantalising elusiveness fanned his sudden passion at

every turn.

Hoping to please their leader, the Camorrist followers began to dance in a circle around the pair, calling merrily upon the girl to redeem the invitation she had given; but Maliella, now somewhat alarmed by the situation in which her saucy audacity had placed her, still tried to escape from the inevitable embrace of the enamoured Rafaele, even though at the same time elated and pleased by the hot words of love and admiration which he poured upon her when at last, by a skilful manœuvre, he seized her in his arms. Then, ere the victorious youth had time to snatch the kiss he hungered for, Maliella pulled out a long, dagger-like pin from her hair, and dared him to the deed at his peril.

Not to be put off by such a threat, Rafaele boldly seized her round the waist, only to receive a sharp stab in the hand from Maliella's stiletto-pin. The girl's daring, however, but inflamed his passion the more; and after kissing the bleeding wound in his hand, he seized the opportunity of Maliella's hands being engaged in replacing the pin in her hair, to thrust a red rose into the loosened bodice of her

gown.

Determined not to admit herself won, even though secretly responsive to the advances of the handsome youth, Maliella plucked out the flower and flung it to the ground; but the procession at that moment appearing in the square, she allowed Rafaele to help her on to a chair that she might get a better view

of the dazzling spectacle.

Rafaele never ceased his pleading for her to heed his words of love and to return his passion; and incensed by her haughty scorn and seeming indifference, he cried out passionately as the Statue of the Madonna was borne by: "What, then, can one do to please you? Must one thieve and do evil to win a kindly glance, since protestations of love and goodwill are naught to you? I will do any deed to satisfy you, if you will but name it—even to the committing of sacrilege! Would you wear the dazzling Jewels of the Madonna? I will snatch them from the passing statue now, if it will cause you to smile on me!"

But Maliella was now terrified at this outburst, and uttered a cry of horror at this last daring suggestion made by Rafaele, who, however, only laughed aloud at her alarm; and at this moment the girl was again accosted by Gennaro, who once more begged her to return to the house, and upbraided her for holding converse with the Camorrist leader, declaring him to be the most notorious law-breaker in Naples and not a fit companion for a young

girl.

Still resenting his interference, Maliella pertly bade Gennaro mind his own business; and yielding herself more and more to the fascination of Rafaele, she now permitted the Camorrist leader to see that his attentions were pleasing to her. Her unmistakable coquetries and roguish glances stung the already jealous Gennaro to madness; and he would have fought with Rafaele then and there had not the return of the procession with the Madonna statue in its midst compelled him, with the entire crowd of merrymakers, to sink upon his knees in prayer.

As the procession passed on its way to the accompaniment of the Carnival rejoicings, Rafaele flung his red rose a second time at the feet of Maliella, who now picked it up, kissed it, and flashing a tender glance at the eagerly expectant Camorrist, fled into the house with a joyous laugh, followed quickly by

the unhappy Gennaro.

Later on, as the three members of the household sat after supper in the back garden, Carmela, anxious for the peace of her home, endeavoured to persuade Maliella to retire to rest early in the evening, even though the festive sounds of the Carnival were still to be heard without; but neither Maliella nor Gennaro heeded her words, both keeping a sullen silence until Carmela, with a deep sigh, bade them good-night and retired to her own chamber.

No sooner had the elder woman departed than the two young people renewed their dispute; and Maliella, again crying out against the restraints of her life, declared she would endure such an existence no longer, but would run away that night and seek a

home elsewhere.

The young blacksmith, half stupefied by this unexpected announcement, begged her to give him a farewell kiss; and when Maliella reluctantly offered him her cheek, he clasped her in his arms and passionately poured forth the tale of his own love and devotion for her. Maliella, utterly unable to regard Gennaro in any other light than that of a brotherly protector, repulsed him with laughing scorn and unbelief; but failing to prevent his further protestations and entreaties for reciprocation, she boldly declared her love for Rafaele, and when Gennaro. with jealousy raging at his heart, turned aside with disdain at the mention of the outlaw Camorrist's name, she passionately announced her preference for one whose love for her was so deep that he was even willing to risk his immortal soul by offering to steal the Jewels of the Madonna for her adornment.

Staggered at such a suggestion of sacrilege, Gennaro

renewed his efforts to prevent the departure of Maliella, who now tried to escape from the garden; and after a fierce struggle, the girl was compelled to retreat, and ran up a little outside staircase to her room with a jaunty step and a carelessly defiant laugh.

Darkness had now fallen; and, left to his own devices, Gennaro gave himself up to the gloom and misery engendered by his unrequited love. Then, suddenly, one tempting thought began to seize hold of his imagination until his whole being became

obsessed with the taunting suggestion.

Had not she expressed her admiration for one who would even commit sacrilege for her sake? The Camorrist, in spite of his boast, had not yet proved his audacity by committing the deed; then, why should not Gennaro himself steal the Jewels of the Madonna this very night, and by laying them at the feet of his adored one, win her love and admiration

away from his rival?

In his present feverish state of mind, Gennaro was utterly unable to resist the temptation of this overwhelming thought; and crushing down his horror at the sacrilege he would thus commit, and thinking only of the joy of winning approbation from his beloved Maliella, the passion-racked youth staggered to his tool-chest, seized some files and other necessary implements, and made his way out from the garden by a seldom-used postern-door, which, however, he carefully locked behind him.

Almost immediately after Gennaro's departure, a band of the Camorrists appeared on the outside of the large, securely-fastened garden gate, headed by the dashing Rafaele, who had brought his companions thither to assist him in serenading his newly-found lady-love; and on hearing sounds of seductive music, Maliella presently appeared on the little staircase that led down from her chamber window. She was now clad in loose white garments, over which she had flung a scarlet shawl; and seeing who the serenaders

were, she hastily ran down the stairs and made her

way to the gate.

Rafaele greeted Maliella with rapturous delight; and his renewed protestations of love and his eager invitation for her to leave her present dull abode and join him in the haunts of the Camorrists were so enticing that she could no longer restrain the responsive chords in her own heart, and was overwhelmed with joy when her lover embraced her through the bars of the gate. The thought that Gennaro might be lurking near, however, filled her with alarm; and entreating Rafaele to depart at once and promising to visit him in the Camorrist abode on the morrow, she tore herself from his embrace.

As Rafaele withdrew with his companions, she stood for a moment as though in a reverie, still feeling the joyous thrill engendered by her lover's presence; then, hearing the sound of approaching steps, she turned hastily and cried out in alarm at the sight of Gennaro, who now stumbled into the garden through the little postern-door, his face white and haggard, and his whole appearance strangely wild.

On beholding Maliella, Gennaro's sunken eyes lighted up with passionate adoration; and approaching her with trembling, uncertain steps, and sinking upon his knees, he flung a bundle at her feet, murmuring brokenly: "For you! For you I did it!"

But Maliella sprang back, horror-struck; for the silvery moonlight showed her that the bundle con-

tained the glittering Jewels of the Madonna!

Full of awe, she gazed upon the sparkling gems until she became fascinated by their rich colour and beauty; and whilst Gennaro poured forth the story of how he had broken into the church and secured the treasures, explaining that he believed the Madonna had already forgiven his sacrilege in consideration of his overwhelming love, the half-dazed girl mechanically began to array herself in the ornaments, placing the diadem on her head, and hanging the chains and bracelets upon her white neck and arms. The form

of the kneeling Gennaro seemed to fade away from her sight altogether, and the glittering jewels conjured up before her mental vision the picture of her beloved Rafaele only; and, as in a trance, she began to murmur words of love, bidding her sweetheart admire her dazzling appearance, as though he were indeed at her side.

Gennaro, in his own overwrought state of mind, now believed that the tender smiles and gentle lovephrases of the entranced girl were addressed to himself; and, full of joy that, as he imagined, his passion was at last returned, he clasped the jewel-decked form

in his arms in a loving embrace.

Maliella, still under the strange spell of the mental vision of Rafaele which her vivid imagination and passionate desire had conjured up, yielded herself unresistingly to the mystical atmosphere of love which enveloped her senses; and as Gennaro, quite unsuspicious of her mistake, and almost mad with the unexpected joy of possession, held her in a close embrace, the half-dreaming girl, lost to her surroundings, uttered a deep sigh of unconscious content and swooned in his arms.

Meanwhile, Rafaele and his companions had returned to the meeting-place of the Camorrists; and here, in a lonely house on the outskirts of the city, a merry throng of outlaws had gathered to pass the remainder of the Festival night in an orgy of feast-

ing, dancing and love-making.

On the entrance of the serenaders, a bevy of bold, pretty maidens surrounded the handsome Rafaele and endeavoured to win kisses and favours from him by their rival attentions; but, to their surprise and disappointment, the Camorrist leader was in no mood for their importunities, and instead of bestowing the eagerly-expected kisses, he chose instead to sing to them a happy love-song, in which he set before them the charms of his beautiful Maliella.

The Camorrist girls, piqued at his preference for a chance stranger, teased him unmercifully because he had not yet succeeded in carrying off his fair ladylove: but Rafaele, caring little for their spiteful taunts, bade them proceed with their revels, and

noise and laughter soon reigned supreme.

Just as the hilarity was at its height, there came a sudden interruption; for, hearing a cry for help from without, Rafaele bade one of the revellers open the door. His command was instantly obeyed; and, to the astonishment of all, in rushed Maliella, still in her night attire and adorned with the Jewels of the Madonna

On awakening from her swoon and finding herself in the arms of Gennaro, she had been filled with dismay on realising that she had, unwittingly, vielded herself to the passion of one suitor when her love was given to another; and, overcome with shame at this discovery, and still horrified at the recollection of the sacrilege which had been committed for her sake, she had struggled free from the detaining embrace of the young blacksmith, and, escaping from the garden, had hastened with all speed to seek protection and comfort from Bafaele.

So exhausted was the girl by her strong emotion and hasty flight, that, on finding herself at last in the presence of her real lover, she had only strength left to announce that she had fled from Gennaro who was even now following her, when she fell fainting to the floor; and as Rafaele bent over her in concern, he commanded a party of his companions to seek for

Gennaro and bring him in, alive or dead.

Stung by the curious glances cast upon him by the saucy Camorrist maidens, Rafaele quickly succeeded in rousing Maliella; and upon his stern demand for an explanation of her present distraught condition. the unhappy girl was compelled to confess how she had, unconsciously, yielded herself to the passion of Gennaro whilst under the spell of her thoughts of Rafaele.

On hearing this strange story, derisive laughter arose on every side from the girls whose kisses the Camorrist leader had refused a short time before; and, stung to madness by their sneers and ridicule, and believing that he had been fooled purposely by Maliella, Rafaele spurned the wretched girl, thrusting her from him with such force that she fell to the ground, thus revealing more conspicuously the dazzling jewels she still wore.

At sight of the Madonna Jewels, and realising that an act of sacrilege had been committed, an awed silence fell upon the revellers; but on hearing the distant voice of the now approaching Gennaro as his pursuers chased him, Maliella declared that the Jewels had been stolen by him for her sake from the sacred

statue.

Full of horror at such a deed, the women and most of the men fled from the house; and as Gennaro staggered in, closely pursued, Rafaele sprang forward to slay him, but suddenly recoiled again superstitiously from one whom he now believed to be accursed.

Maliella, distracted by the sin which had been committed for her sake, and full of despair because Rafaele now disdained her love, poured forth passionate words of reproach upon the wretched Gennaro; and snatching from her neck and arms the flashing Jewels of the Madonna, she flung them to the ground at his feet and rushed from the house, demented,

crying wildly: "To the sea! To the sea!"

Rafaele and all the revellers had by this time left the house, shudderingly, as though it had been visited by the plague, for wild and lawless though they were, their superstitious beliefs still had power to fill them with terror because of the sacrilegious deed that had been committed; and Gennaro was thus left alone for the time being, though some of the bolder spirits amongst the Camorrists intended to return later to deal him his death-blow.

But Gennaro cared not whether he died by the hands of the Camorrists or not; for his whole being was now enveloped in horror for the deed of which he was guilty. Full of repentance and only longing for pardon, he crawled upon his knees towards a fresco figure of the Virgin which appeared upon one of the walls of the room, and prostrating himself before it, prayed earnestly for forgiveness.

A streak of rosy light from the rising sun at that moment pierced the gloomy twilight; and taking this as a miraculous sign sent to him in answer to his prayers as a token of the Madonna's forgiveness,

Gennaro uttered a cry of thanksgiving.

Then, still not deeming himself worthy to live after his deed of sacrilege, and overwhelmed by the despairing hopelessness of his unhappy love passion, he seized a knife from a table close at hand and

plunged it into his heart.

At this moment, some of the Camorrists, accompanied by an angry mob of the townsfolk who had just discovered the crime that had been committed, burst into the house to wreak their vengeance upon the committer of sacrilege; but one and all stopped suddenly upon the threshold and dropped their weapons in silence as they gazed upon the limp form of the unhappy Gennaro lying dead beside the scattered Jewels of the Madonna.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE COMPOSERS

AUBER

Daniel François Esprit Auber was born at Caen, Normandy, 29th January, 1782: died at Paris, 13th May, 1871. He was the son of a Paris print-seller, and was sent in early youth to acquire knowledge of business in London; and whilst in England he devoted himself assiduously to the study of music. On returning to Paris he began to compose operas; and with La Bergère Châtelaine (1820), began a long and brilliant series of triumphs. His best-known operas are:—Fra Diavolo (1830), Les Diamants de la Couronne (1841), Haydée (1847), Manon Lescaut (1869), Le Cheval de Bronze (1835), etc.

BALFE

MICHAEL WILLIAM BALVE was born at Dublin, 15th May, 1808: died at Rowney Abbey, 20th October, 1870. He displayed remarkable musical talent as a boy; and when only sixteen conducted the orchestra at Drury Lane Theatre. Later he studied music in Italy; and in 1845 he was made conductor of the Italian Opera, Covent Garden. He wrote a great many operas, the best known of which are:—The Bohemian Girl (1843), The Rose of Castile (1857), Satanella (1858), The Maid of Honour (1847), Joan of Arc (1837), etc.

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BEETHOVEN

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN, one of the greatest of musicians, was born at Bonn, 16th December, 1770: died 26th March, 1827. He was the son of a tenor singer in the service of the Elector of Cologne. His wonderful talent for music was early displayed and cultivated, and even in his eighth year he delighted all who heard him by his truly astonishing execution on the violin. He began to compose sonatas in his thirteenth year, and these promising signs of genius caused the Elector of Cologne to send him, in the character of his Court-Organist, to Vienna, to study composition under the instruction of Haydn, Schenk, and Albrechtsberger. Here, except for some few years spent in the new Court of the King of Westphalia, Beethoven passed the remainder of his life, latterly retiring to the village of Modlingen, near Vienna. Most of his principal works were composed after 1801. He did not hold musical offices, but devoted himself entirely to composition; and though at first he appeared as a pianoforte player, he afterwards withdrew entirely from the world, and lived in a solitude enhanced latterly by almost total deafness. Beethoven was essentially a composer of instrumental music, which received from his work an entirely new and original character, and he developed the symphonic art to a surprising boldness and breadth of form and outline, filling this in with a truly marvellous wealth of grand melody—the landmark of a completely new phase in the history of music. Beethoven only wrote one opera, Fidelio (first entitled Leonore), and one sacred cantata, The Mount of Olives; but, original and beautiful as these are, they still show us that this great musician was at his greatest in his instrumental works, upon which his chief fame rests. Besides his noble symphonies and overtures, his quintettes,

quartettes, and trios, for stringed instruments, his numerous sonatas, variations, and other pieces for the pianoforte, all show the great richness, power, and originality of his imagination. Beethoven died in the village of Modlingen on 26th March, 1827.

BELLINI

Vincenzo Bellini was born in Catania, in Sicily, 3rd November, 1802; died at Puteux, near Paris, 24th September, 1835. He studied at the Conservatorium in Naples, and in 1833 went to Paris. He produced a number of operas, his style being chiefly founded on that of the then fashionable Rossini, but with the defects of that composer's florid work somewhat exaggerated. Rossini was, however, a good friend to the young Bellini, and gave him very valuable assistance and encouragement. Bellini's best known and most attractive operas are La Sonnambula (La Scala, 1831), Norma (26th December, 1831), and I Puritani (1835); all of which are full of melodious airs, and have attained great popularity.

BENEDICT

Sin Julius Benedict was born at Stuttgart, 27th November, 1804; died 5th June, 1885. In his early years he studied with J. C. L. Abeille, and was also under Hummel at Weimar, where he was presented to Weber, who then took him entirely under his charge, treating him more as a son than as a pupil. At the age of nineteen years, he was appointed

conductor of the Karnthnerthor Theatre in Vienna. From there he went to Italy, and was appointed Chef d'Orchestre at the San Carlos at Naples. Here he produced his first opera, Giacinta ed Ernesto (1829). In 1835, he went to England, which country he made his home for the remainder of his life. Here his finest operas were written and produced, The Brides of Venice being produced in 1843, and The Crusaders. 1846; and in 1836 he was made musical director of the Opera Buffa at the Lyceum Theatre. In 1850, he accompanied Jenny Lind to the United States, as director of her concerts. On his return in 1852, he was appointed conductor of the Harmonic Union. In 1862 he produced his popular opera, The Lily of Killarney, a musical version of Dion Boucicault's play, The Colleen Bawn. In 1871 he was knighted; and he died in England on 5th June, 1885. Besides his operas, Benedict also wrote some very charming cantatas, chief of which are *Undine* (1860) and Richard Cœur de Lion (1863); also Graziella (1882), afterwards performed as an opera. He also wrote the oratorios, St. Cecilia (1866) and St. Peter (1870); and a number of other smaller musical pieces.

BIZET

ALEXANDER CÉSAR LEOPOLD BIZET (known as Georges) was born at Paris on 25th October 1838: died 3rd June, 1875. The son of a singing-master, he entered the Conservatoire at the age of nine years; and at the early age of nineteen gained the Grand Prix de Rome, and went to Italy to study. On returning to France, Bizet began to write operas, the first of which Pêcheurs de Perles was produced at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1863. It was but coldly received, as were also La Jolie Fille de Perth (1867),

Djamileh (1872) and L'Arlésienne, in spite of their unusual merits. In 1875 Carmen was produced at the Opera Comique. This masterpiece quickly gained for Bizet world-wide fame, and placed him in the first rank of French composers. The Parisians, however, received the opera coldly; and it was not until eight years later, when it had been appraised everywhere else that they at last recognised its extraordinary charm and genius. Carmen was the last work of Bizet; for, three months after its first production, just as success was within his grasp, the gifted composer was seized with sudden illness and died.

DONIZETTI

GAETANO DONIZETTI was born at Bergamo, Italy, 25th September, 1798; died there 8th April, 1848. His musical education was conducted at Bologna and Naples: and at first, at his father's wish, he devoted himself to church music, for which, however, he had no taste, and to evade which he entered the army. Whilst thus away from home, he wrote his first two operas. Enrico di Borgogna and Il Falegname de Livonia, the latter of which was so successful that he left the army and devoted himself entirely to operawriting. He wrote with great rapidity and ease, and produced no less than sixty operas. His style was founded on that of Rossini, and his flowing melodies have attained great popularity. After 1844, Donizetti's talent seemed to have utterly exhausted itself, and he began to suffer from melancholia, which finally developed into insanity. Donizetti's chief operas were: The Daughter of the Regiment (1840). La Favorita (1840), Don Pasquale (1843), Lucia di Lammermoor (1835), L'Eliser d'Amore (1832), Lucrezia Bergia (1834), Linda de Chamouni (1842), etc.

FLOTOW

FRIEDRICH VON FLOTOW was born at Teutondorf, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, 26th April, 1812; died at Darmstadt, 23rd January, 1883. He received his musical education at Paris, where he early began to write operas. His first real success was scored with Stradella, produced at Hamburg in 1844. Martha was produced in 1847, and quickly won the composer world-wide fame. It was produced in England at the Royal Italian Opera in 1858, and instantly obtained popularity with the English public. Flotow wrote several other operas, none of which are well known in England.

GOUNOD

CHARLES FRANÇOIS GOUNOD was born at Paris, 17th June, 1818; died there 18th October, 1893. He entered the Conservatoire in 1836, and took the Grand Prix de Rome in 1839. In Rome he was appointed Honorary Maestre di Capella for life. After several years of study, he produced his Messe Solonnelle in G, some portions of which were brought out in London in 1851. He held in Paris, from 1852-60, the post of conductor of the Orphéon. He wrote operas from 1851. Faust was produced at the Theatre Lyrique in 1859, and placed him at once in the first rank of his profession. Amongst his other best known operas are: -Roméo et Juliette (1867), Sapho (1851), Philemon et Baucis (1860), Cing-Mars (1877), etc. In 1882 he produced an oratorio, The Redemption, at the Birmingham Musical Festival; and he also wrote much church music.

HALÈVY

JACOUES FRANCOIS FROMENTAL HALEVY Was born in Paris, 27th May, 1799; died at Nice, 1862. Showing great musical ability in his early years, he entered the Conservatoire when only ten years old, and studied under Cavot, Berton, and Lambert, and for five years received lessons in counterpoint from Cherubini. He also studied for two years at Rome, and later became a popular teacher, numbering amongst his most celebrated pupils, Gounod and Bizet. He met with no important success until the year 1835, when he produced two operas:—La Juive, presented 23rd February, and L'Eclair, presented 16th December. La Juive was an immediate success, and won for its composer a first place amongst French musicians. Fifteen years later, this opera was produced at Covent Garden, where it also met with great appreciation and success. La Juive is the only one of Halèvy's operas that still enjoys European fame, though he wrote many others, the most worthy of mention being La Reine de Chypre (1841), Les Mousquetaires (1846), Guido et Ginevra, and Le Val d'Andorre.

HUMPERDINCK

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK was born 1st September, 1854, at Siegburg, in the Rhine Provinces. His musical education was received first at the Gymnasium of Paderborn, and afterwards at the Cologne Conservatoire, where he was entered in 1872. In 1876, he won the Mozart Stipendium, and proceeded to

Munich. In 1879, he won the Mendelssohn Stiftung of Berlin; after which he visited Italy, where he made the acquaintance of Wagner at Naples, and became so friendly with the great composer that he afterwards helped him with the production of Parsifal at Bayreuth. In 1881, he won the Meyerbeer prize of Berlin; and after having produced a number of compositions for the orchestra, he produced his masterpiece opera, Hansel und Gretel, the libretto of which was written by his sister, Adelheid Wette. This beautiful fairy opera was produced first at Weimar in 1894; and the first production of it in London was in 1895 It met with great success, and was followed in 1896 by the charming allegorical opera, Die Königskinder, and in 1902 by Dornröschen. 1896, Humperdinck was created Professor by the Kaiser; and in 1905, his opera, Die Heirath Wider Willen, was produced at Berlin. He also wrote the incidental music for Maeterlinck's beautiful allegorical play, The Blue Bird. Humperdinck's operas are remarkable for the beauty and simplicity of their subjects, and for the exquisite delicacy of their musical 'treatment.

LEONCAVALLO

RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO was born at Naples 8th March, 1858. He studied at the Neapolitan Conservatoire, and afterwards gave singing lessons and went through many hard struggles. His first opera, Medici, being part of a trilogy, Crepusculinis, was not produced until after Pagliacci (produced at the Teatro dal Verme, Milan, 21st May, 1892) had won great success for him. Medici was given in 1893, but proved unsuccessful, and the remaining portions of the trilogy, Savonarola and Cesare Borgia, were not produced. The other operas that followed were:

Der Roland (1894); Chatterton (1896); La Bohème (1897); Zaza (1900); but none of these have met with great success, his lighter work, such as Zaza and Pagliacci, being in his happiest vein. Another opera, Maia, was produced at the Royal Opera House, Berlin, on 17th March, 1911.

MASCAGNI

PIETRO MASCAGNI was born at Leghorn, 7th December, 1863. His father intended him for the law, and discouraged his many efforts to learn music. musical youth, however, entered himself secretly at the Instituto Luigi Cherubini, his chief instructor being Alfredo Soffredini. Later on an uncle adopted him: and he was then permitted to devote himself entirely to music, and was afterwards sent to Milan Conservatoire. Unable to bear the restrictions of the Conservatoire, however, Mascagni joined various travelling operatic companies as conductor, and for a time lived in great obscurity, from whence he emerged by the success of his brilliant one-act opera. Cavalleria Rusticana, which won the first prize in a competition, and was produced at the Costanzi Theatre, Rome, 18th May, 1890. This was received with overwhelming appreciation, and made its composer immediately famous. His next opera was L'Amico Fritz (1891): after which followed:—I Rantzan (1892); Guglielino Ratcliff (1895); Silvano (1895); Zanetto (1896); Iris (1898); Le Maschère (1901); Amica (1905); but none of these have fulfilled the brilliant promise of Cavalleria Rusticana, and have met with little success.

MEYERBEER

GIACOMO MEYERBEER was born at Berlin, 5th September, 1791: died at Paris, 2nd May, 1864. He was a

pupil of Lauska, and also had lessons from Clementi. In 1815 he went to Italy to study musical composition, and there he began to write operas. He first took Rossini as his model, the best example of which was Il Crociata (1824). In 1831 he struck out in a new style with Robert le Diable, produced at the Grand Opera, Paris. This beautiful and fantastic opera was received with the wildest enthusiasm, and quickly brought fame to the composer. His masterpiece was Les Huguenots (1836) and his other bestknown works are:-Le Prophête (1849), L'Etoile du Nord (1854), Dinorah (1859), etc.

MOZART

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born at Salzburg, Austria, on 27th January, 1756: died at Vienna, 5th December, 1791. He showed a precocious knowledge of music when but three or four years of age, and composed before he was six. His father, a musician also, guided his efforts, and from 1762-65 took the child to many European cities to exhibit his talents. In 1768 Mozart was made Concert-Meister at Salzburg; and here his first opera, La Finta Semplice, was produced, written when about twelve years old. In 1777 he went to Paris and other places, failing to obtain anything but empty applause; and in 1779 he returned to Salzburg as Cathedral organist. From 1781 he lived in Vienna, where he remained until his death. He reaped but little pecuniary benefit from his compositions, in spite of his great genius; and he was seldom free from the anxieties of poverty. In 1791 he received the famous commission from a mysterious stranger to write a Requiem Mass; and in enfeebled health he began it, declaring that it was for his own funeral. This was his last great work, and he died ere it was quite finished. There were

no ceremonies at his grave, and he was buried in the common ground of St Marx. Many years later a monument was erected to him by the city of Vienna. As an operatic writer, Mozart is considered by many to have no equal. His chief operas are:—Le Nozze di Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), Idomeneo (1781), Die Zauberflöte (1791), La Chemenza di Lito (1791), Cose fan tutte (1790), etc. Besides the exquisite Requiem, he wrote many other Masses, and a great number of symphonies, sonatas, concertos, quartettes, etc. Very little of his music was published in his lifetime.

NICOLAT

CARL OTTO EHRENFRIED NICOLAI was born at Königsberg, 9th June, 1810: died at Berlin, 11th May, 1849. He had an unhappy home life, but found a good friend in Justizrath Adler, of Stargard, who sent him to Berlin to study music. In 1833 he went to Rome as Organist to the Prussian Embassy Chapel, where he studied both the old and the modern masters. In 1841 he became Court Kapellmeister at Vienna, where in 1842 he established the Philharmonic Society. In 1844 he became Director of the Domcher and Court Kapellmeister of the Opera in Berlin. His chief operas were: The Templar (1840), Il Proscritto (1841), and The Merry Wives of Windsor (1849). The latter met with a brilliant success, which, however, the composer did not long live to enjoy, as he died two months after its first production.

OFFENBACH

JACQUES OFFENBACH (originally Levy) was born 21st June, 1819, at Offenbach-on-Main, and was the son of the Jewish Cantor of the Synagogue at Cologne. Though of German birth, practically the whole of his life was spent in Paris, and he was a true Parisian at heart. When quite a youth, he was entered at the Conservatoire at Paris, studying in the violincello class under Professor Vaslin. So quick was his progress, that he entered the orchestra of the Opéra Comique in 1834, where he played the 'cello; and in 1849, he was appointed conductor of the orchestra at the Théatre Français. In 1855, he opened the Bouffes-Parisiens Théatre; and having already written a number of comic light operas, many of these were produced at his own theatre. He became manager of the Théatre de la Gâité in 1872; and in 1877 he came to England, where he made a most successful tour. As a composer of light opera, Offenbach occupied on the Continent very much the same position as Gilbert and Sullivan in England, his works being extremely popular. From the long list of just over one hundred pieces of this kind for the stage may be mentioned the following of the best known in England: -La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein (1867), Madame Favart (1878), Orphée aux Enfers (1858), La Princesse de Trébizonde (1870), La Belle Hélène (1865), etc. So great was the popular demand for light opera, and so eager was Offenbach to meet the same, that, unfortunately, he only left behind him one serious work of art, The Tales of Hoffmann—a true work of genius, so full of beauty that one can only regret that it should have been his last. It was fitting, however, that his swan-song should prove his masterpiece. Offenbach himself knew that this was his worthiest work, and longed to see it produced; but, after completing the opera, he became ill, and died at Paris on 5th October, 1880, having failed to realise his great desire. The opera was produced the following year at the Opéra Comique, and proved an immense success. It was produced in England in 1907.

PUCCINI

IACOMO PUCCINI was born at Lucca, 22nd June, 1858. and belongs to a family of well-known musicians. He studied first at Lucca, and afterwards at Milan Conservatoire, his chief teacher being Ponchielli. His first opera, Le Villi, was produced at the Teatro dal Verme, Milan, 31st May, 1884, with such success that it was afterwards revised and enlarged, and produced at La Scala, 24th January, 1885. His next opera, Edgar, was produced at La Scala, 1889. Manon Lescaut, produced at the Teatro Regio, Turin, showed considerable development; and with the production of La Bohème (Teatro Regio, Turin, 1896), he was placed at once in the first rank of modern composers. His next opera, Tosca (1900), met with equal success. Madame Butterfly (La Scala, Milan, 1904) is undoubtedly the finest work Puccini has yet produced; yet when first given, for some unaccountable reason, it was not well received. But on its second appearance at Brescia, it was received with the greatest applause, and has also been enthusiastically welcomed wherever it has been produced, being now, together with La Bohème, a universal European favourite. His American opera, The Girl of the Golden West, was first produced in New York during 1911, and proved a great success.

ROSSINI

GIOACCHINI ANTONIO ROSSINI was born at Pesaro, in Italy, 29th February, 1792, of very humble parents, his father being the town trumpeter. As a child, he showed such great aptitude for music that, in spite of

the troubles and poverty of his parents, an excellent teacher was found for him in Tesei. He was taught to sing the solos in church, and at the age of thirteen years was given an appointment as a singer at the theatre. In 1806 he entered the Conservatoire at Bologna, under Mattei; and here his progress was so rapid that he took a prize for a cantata after his first year. In 1810 he began to write operas, of which he produced no less than fifty within twenty-six years. He went to London in 1823, and sang in a series of concerts. He then went to Paris, where he remained until his death. He wrote nothing further after 1836; and having at that early period of his career gained great fame and wealth, he devoted the remainder of his life to luxurious living. Rossini's florid, but melodious, style of operatic composition remained the standard model for Italian opera for a great number of years. His most celebrated operas were: Tancredi (1813), The Barber of Seville (1815), Semiramide (1823), and William Tell (1829). He also wrote the famous oratorio, Moses in Egypt, which has also been performed as an opera; and in 1842 his Stabat Mater was produced. He died 13th November, 1868.

STRAUSS

RICHARD STRAUSS was born 11th June, 1864, at Munich. He showed great musical talent from the earliest years, having composed several pieces before leaving school. In 1882, he studied composition with the Court Kapellmeister, composing almost ceaselessly string quartettes, symphonies and over-tures, most of which were performed and received as promising productions. He was at the University during 1882-3, and in 1885 began to conduct, being appointed musical director at Meiningen, proceeding to the Munich Court Theatre in 1886. He was next

appointed musical director at Weimar in 1890, and became Court Kapellmeister at the Berlin Opera House in the same year. He travelled in Italy during 1885. His first opera, Guntran, was produced at Weimar on 12th May, 1894; and in the same year he became Count Kapellmeister at Munich, again occupying the same position at Berlin in 1899. He undertook a number of tours, and in 1897 visited London, where a "Strauss Festival" was held in St. James's Hall, June, 1903. Strauss continued to produce more and more important works, consisting of symphonies, sonatas, tone-poems, and many songs, choral and orchestral pieces, all of which proved his great gift for musical composition and paved the way for the remarkable operatic works which were to follow. He always had a great admiration for Wagner, whose successor he wished to be regarded as; and in his next opera, Fuersnot, produced at Dresden in November, 1901, this was indicated very plainly. His remarkable opera, Salome, based on Oscar Wilde's drama, was produced at Dresden, 9th December, 1905, and created a great sensation. placing Strauss at once in the front rank of operatic composers. This was followed by Elektra-by many regarded as his finest work-produced at Dresden in 1909, and at Covent Garden, London, in 1910, and Der Rosenkavalier, produced at the Royal Opera House, Dresden, 26th January, 1911, and in London, January, 1913—both of which have added to the now world-wide reputation and appreciation of this highlygifted composer.

His latest work, Ariadne au Naxos—a clever "freak" opera written as an incidental musical interlude to Molière's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme—was produced in London at His Majesty's Theatre, on 27th May, 1913, having been heard previously at Stuttgart

in October, 1912.

AMBROISE THOMAS

CHARLES AMBROISE THOMAS was born at Metz, 5th August, 1811; died at Paris, 12th February, 1896. Born of musical parents, he entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of seventeen, becoming director of that institute in 1871. In 1832 he won the Grand Prix de Rome; and whilst studying in Italy was very active as a composer. On his return from Rome he began to write operas, the first of which, La Double Echelle, produced at the Opéra Comique in 1837, met with considerable success. Others followed; and with Le Caid (1849) and Le Songe d'une Nuit d'été (1850), his name was finally established, and gained him a high place amongst French composers. The operas that followed met with little success; but in Mignon, produced at the Opéra Comique in 1866, the musical world recognised a masterpiece, and paid enthusiastic tribute to the genius of its composer. Other operas by Ambroise Thomas are: Hamlet (1868), Le Cardinal de Venise (1857), Raymond (1851), etc.

TSCHAIKOVSKY

PETER ILJTSCH TSCHAIKOVSKY was born in Wotkinsk, 7th May, 1840: died at St Petersburg, 5th November, 1905. He early showed his bent for music, and though trained for the law, abandoned that profession, and, determining to study music alone, entered the Conservatoire at St Petersburg, where he studied with Anton Rubenstein and Saremba. After studying three years in St. Petersburg, Tschaikovsky was appointed a teacher at the new Moscow Conservatorium.

established by Nicholas Rubenstein, where he produced a number of orchestral works and three operas. His first opera, The Voievoda, produced in Moscow in 1869, was a failure; and of the list of eleven operas which he produced, but a few retained lasting popularity, with the exception of Vakoula the Blacksmith, and Eugene Onegin. The latter is the most famous of all his works, and is still extremely popular in Russia, being full of delightful melodies. Eugene Onegin was first produced in Moscow in 1879. Amongst his other operas are The Enchantress, The Queen of Spades; Joan of Arc, Mazeppa, Iolanthe, Undine. The Oprichinki. Besides these. Tschaikovsky wrote a great number of brilliant orchestral works, deservedly popular throughout Europe, being noted for their fine tone-colouring, spirit, and beauty of melody: amongst the most celebrated of these being the rich Overture "1812," composed in memory of Nicholas Rubenstein, the Fifth Symphony and the Sixth Symphony, The Pathètique,

VERDI

GUISEPPE VERDI was born at Rancola, in the Duchy of Parma, Italy, 10th October, 1813: died at Busseto, in January, 1901. He received his musical education at Busseto and Milan. He was appointed organist at Rancola at the age of ten years; and when but twenty years old he became Director of the Philharmonic Society at Busseto. He settled in Milan in 1838, and there his first opera, Oberto di San Bonifazio, was produced at La Scala in 1839. The opera that first brought him European fame was Ernani (1844). Rigoletto was produced in 1851, and Il Trovatore in 1853; and these two operas, through all changes of taste and style, still continue to hold their own in popular favour. He wrote many other operas, the

best known of which are: La Traviata (1853), Aïda (1871), Othello (1877), Macbeth (1847), Falstaff (1893), I Lombardi (1843), Il Ballo in Maschera (1859), Simon Boccanegra (1857), Les Vespres Siciliennes (1855), etc. His other works include a Requiem Mass (1847), and other sacred compositions, etc.

WAGNER

RICHARD WAGNER was born at Leipzig on 22nd May, 1813: died at Venice, 13th February, 1883. He was educated at Dresden and Leipzig, where he also studied music. Poetry was a passion with him as a boy; and verse and play-writing occupied his mind until a great enthusiasm for Beethoven turned it into a musical direction. He was Musical Director at the Magdeburg Theatre from 1834-36, Conductor at Königsberg in 1836, Music Director at Riga in 1837-39, and lived in Paris in 1839-42, where he struggled in vain to obtain a footing. His opera Rienzi was produced at Dresden in 1842 with a success which obtained for him the post of Kapellmeister at the operahouse there. The Flying Dutchman was produced the following year at Dresden, and marked a new epoch in his artistic history. Tannhäuser, the first of his creations from the German myth-world, was also produced at Dresden in 1845. After this he got into pecuniary difficulties; and his sympathies also being with the revolutionary movement of 1849, he was proscribed, and escaped to Paris. By the efforts of Liszt, Lohengrin was produced in 1850 at Weimar. After ten years of exile, Wagner was pardoned, and took up his residence at Munich, where King Ludwig of Bavaria became his enthusiastic and generous patron. Tristan and Isolda was produced at Munich in 1865; and this genuine music-drama marked a new epoch in operatic art. Die Meistersinger followed in 1868. Wagner was now world-famous, and his colossal genius began to receive the support it deserved. In 1872 his own great theatre at Bayreuth was founded; and upon its completion in 1876, his noble tetralogy, Der Ring des Nibelungen was produced there. His last dramatic effort and crowning achievement, Parsifal, was produced at Bayreuth in 1882. Wagner's early years were full of struggle, opposition, and strife; but through all his disappointments he clung firmly to the new and great ideals of art he had formed, and in the end he conquered, his latter years being crowned with success and enthusiastic appreciation.

WALLACE

WILLIAM VINCENT WALLACE was born at Waterford, Ireland, 1st July, 1814; died at the château of Bayen, in the Haute-Garonne, France, 12th October, 1865, His father, a bandmaster, gave him his first instructions; and at an early age he could play most military instruments, besides being very proficient on the violin. At the age of fifteen he became Director of the Philharmonic Society in Dublin. In 1835 he set forth on a professional tour through Australia, New Zealand, India, South America, and the United States, meeting with enormous success as composer and performer. He was Director of Music at the Italian Theatre, Mexico, 1841-42. In 1845 Maritana was produced in London, and shares with Balfe's Bohemian Girl the highest popularity of any lyrical drama. Other well-known operas of Wallace's are: Lurline (1860), The Amber Witch (1861), Matilda of Hungary (1847), The Desert Flower (1863), etc.

VON WALTERSHAUSEN

HERMANN WOLFGANG VON WALTERSHAUSEN Was born in Göttingen in 1882, and was the son of a Strasburg Professor of National Economics, A. Sartorius von Waltershausen, being descended from a well-known Göttingen family of scientists. He was the pupil of I. Erb, in Strasburg, Elsass, and Ludwig Thuille, afterwards passing to the University of Munich, where he studied in particular the History of Art and also made a special study of the characteristics of the German peoples. His first musical work was the unpublished music-drama, Pelegrino, and his second effort was Else Klapperzehen, a musical comedy dealing with a farcical subject taken from the German Middle Ages, and which was produced in May, 1909, by Ernst von Schuch at the Court Theatre, Munich, with success. His third work, the musical tragedy, Oberst Chabert, was given under the conductorship of Hans Schilling-Ziemssens Leitung, 18th January, 1912, and, being immediately successful, found its way very quickly into all the more important theatres. In addition to these works, Herr von Waltershausen has also written purely literary works, amongst others the Festival Play, Die Abschiedssyphonie, produced in Munich in 1908, the comedy in verse, Heidhart Fuchs von Reuenthal, as well as portions of a translation of Horace in very modern form. Herr von Waltershausen resides in Munich.

WOLF-FERRARI

ERMANNI WOLF-FERRARI was born 12th January, 1876, at Venice. He studied under Rheinberge at Munich from 1893 to 1895; and in 1902 he was appointed Director of the Liceo Benedetto Marcello in Venice,

from which position he resigned in 1909, as he desired to live in Germany. He produced his first opera, La Sulamita, at Venice in 1889 before he went to Munich, this work being the result of his own self-teaching. Other operas followed: Cenerentola, produced at Venice in 1902; Le Donne Curiose, in 1903, this latter opera having been recently produced with success in America. His fine cantata, La Vita Nuova, dealing with the subject of Dante and Beatrice, was brought out in 1903. A light opera, The Secret of Susanna, followed this, and was produced in England in 1911; and his dramatic opera, The Jewels of the Madonna, was given in England during the summer of 1912.

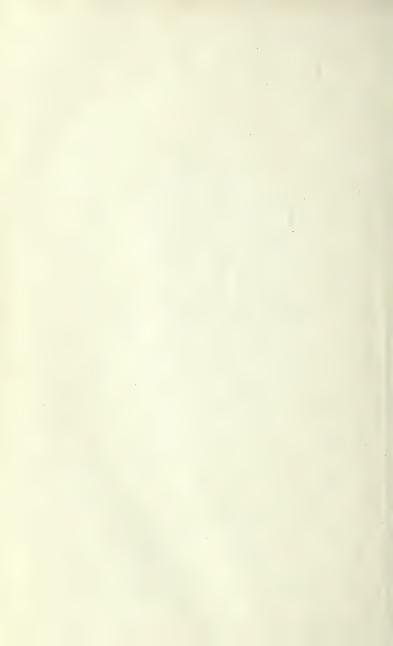
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